DELPHINE.

Surfojee Rajah

BY

MADAME DE STAEL-HOLSTEIN.

976

Un Homme doit savoir braver l'Opinion! une Femme s'y soumettre.

A Man ought to be able to brave public Opinion; a Woman should submit to it. *Madame Neckar's Miscellanies.*

IN SIX VOLUMES.

VOL. VI.

London:

PRINTED FOR J. MAWMAN, IN THE POULTRY.

1803.

By T. Gillet, Salisbury Square,

DELPHINE.

976

LETTER I.

DELPHINE TO MAD[LLE] D'ALBEMAR.

Abbey of Paradise, July 1, 1792.

I HAVE been the cause of the death of a man, my dear friend; and in vain do I ransack my mind for excuses, or explanations of my conduct: I am conscious there was nothing criminal in my intentions, but I ought, most assuredly, to have been more studious to consult and humour the character of M. de Valrobe.—I should not have given him an asylum in my own house; it was a sentiment, indeed, of good-nature that prompted me to do so; but does the condition

dition of women permit them to yield to every thing that is good in itself? Was it not incumbent upon me to calculate the consequences, even of a kind action, and to devise a more prudent mode of reconciling goodness of heart with those duties which society has imposed upon our sex? If I had left no room for self-reproach, should I be thus supremely miserable? Sufferings such as I endure, must necessarily arise from grievous faults.

I am eternally turning over in my mind, what I might have written to M. de Valrobe, to soothe the despair into which he must havesunk, when I acquainted him with my new situation. Methinks, that a transient fear of what has just happened, shot across my heart; but my mind did not dwell sufficiently long upon it. I try to recall the moment when I felt that fear, the degree of attention which I paid to it, and the nature of the thoughts which diverted my attention from it—I endeavour to retrace back the slightest vestiges of my

my reflexions, that they may either accuse or acquit me: in fine, I have to reproach myself with not bestowing on the memory of M. de Valrobe, those sentiments which he expected from me, and with not sufficiently regretting a man who died because he loved me.

I dare not venture to permit my thoughts to dwell upon Leonce: it seems as if M. de Valrobe was pursuing me with reproaches.—Solitude is no longer a refuge for Delphine; every where the dead start up before her.

You know, my dear friend, when formerly we were together, how much I delighted in pensive contemplation; the roaring of the winds, and of the billows of the sea, which we frequently heard at our then abode, filled me with sensations the most delightful: while my ear hung on these harmonious sounds, my mind was wrapped in futurity, and as I confusedly blended the thoughts of youth with those of another world, I felt myself deliciously

lost amidst all the chances of happiness which Time presented to my view under a thousand different hues and forms. Even this very summer, when I had nothing to expect but pain and sorrow; frequently as, during the night, I walked in the garden of the abbey, I cast my eyes upon the Alps and the Heavens; I recalled to my recollection those sublime writings which, from my earliest years, have consecrated my life to the love and cultivation of every thing that is great and good—the wild strains of Ossian, the solemn hymns of Thompson, to nature and his Creator; and all that poetry, so congenial to the soul, which makes us discover a kind of secret mysterious intimation of futurity, in the silence of the heavens and beauties of the earth; in fine, that magic and marvellous of the imagination, raised me often, when alone, above the reach of grief itself: I then pondered on the fate of all that has been distinguished in the world, and I invariably found

found it was attended with misfortune.—Love, virtue, genius, every thing that reflects honour on humanity, has been persecuted by man. Why then, said I to myself, why repine at my lot? Since I have ventured to feel, to think, to love, have I not condemned myself to suffer? and then I cast a loftier look upon those stars that have received and shelter all the ideas and all the affections which the vulgar inhabitants of the world have rejected. From this disposition of my frame of mind, I derived no small consolation: it assisted me in bearing up under the new state of life which I had embraced; but since the death of M. de Valorbe, I am no longer the same: when alone, a knawing consciousness, a restless and fretful anxiety, prevents me from enjoying the sweets of solitude.

I must try the experiment of a mode of life more usefully employed; I must endeavour to devote my existence to the welfare of others, that I may be better en-

abled to support my own: the inward satisfaction which arises from an uninterrupted series of beneficent acts; the animating hope of purifying and exalting my soul, by continued exertions to alleviate distress, may perhaps contribute to dispel the gloom that hangs upon my mind; the tenour of the idle hours we drag along here, begins to weigh too heavily upon me. Thought and reflection, instead of calming my mind, tend only to waste and wither me away; the only means by which I can escape from myself, is to be incessantly employed in soothing the sufferings of humanity; under these impressions, I have conceived a project, to which, my dear sister, I must beg your attention.—Yes, attend to it, I pray you, and give it the full countenance of your approbation.

In the company of Madame de Ternan, I can no longer feel any pleasure. I have lost the secret of pleasing her, since the misfortunes I have experienced have rendered me incapable of amusing her. There

is a deep cast of melancholy in her character, which make real, well-grounded sorrows odious in her sight: no, never was there any being less calculated than she is, to administer consolation; for she attends only to what personally regards herself, and it would seem as if she believed in nothing she herself did not feel, and, as if anxious that every thing that surrounded her should become a modification of herself. From this woman, from a woman who has done me so much mischief, I am impatient to withdraw, and to enter into some religious association, who devote themselves to pursuits of beneficence. I have not the most distant calling for the mode of life we pursue here. The dull uniform round of punctilious practices imposed upon us, constitute, in my way of thinking, a kind of hypocrisy, from which my character is wholly abhorrent. Far, however, am I from being disposed to shake off, like Madame de Ternan, the yoke of those

religious exercises which are imposed upon us; I should dread, by so doing, to wound the feelings of my companions, who so cheerfully submit to them; yet am I eager to fulfil certain duties, the performance of which coincides better with the notions I entertain of virtue.

Yesterday a monk from Mount St. Bernard chanced to come to our convent—as I observed his countenance, methinks I discovered in it an expression of calmness and sensibility which seldom appears in the countenance of our nuns. I walked with him for some time; and, as we walked along, he hit upon a story, to which, though he did not seem to attach the same importance that I did, had powers however deeply to interest my heart.—An aged monk of his order, who was weighed down with infirmities, and who, for their solacement, had retired among the sick and infirm of the convent, was informed, this last winter, that a traveller, who had fallen into the snow at a small distance from

from the convent, was at the very point of death. The monk happened at the moment to be left alone—all his brethren being absent on their respective callings. He did not, however, hesitate a moment, but went forth and found the unfortunate traveller ready to expire amidst a heap of snow. It was in vain to attempt to carry him away: the traveller could scarcely hear what was said to him. The aged friar threw himself upon his knees, near him, amongst the heaps of ice that surrounded them; he inclined himself towards his ear, and endeavoured to pour into it those consolatory words which reanimate hope, even on the brink of the grave. In that situation he remained nearly an hour, while a continued shower of rain and sleet, which on the summit of the Alps proves mortal, even to the vigour of youth, poured down upon his silver locks and crazy frame. The good old monk now raised, and now softened his voice, according to the expression that spoke upon the coun-

tenance of his dying patient—over the pangs of agonizing nature, he continued to shed the balm of consolation, and followed the soul of the sufferer to the last breath in which it expired, that he might mitigate his moral pains, while his physical frame was struggling into dissolution. A few days after, the monk himself was no more: he died from the excess of cold to which he was exposed upon that occasion.—The man who related to me this instance of generous self-sacrifice, seemed to stand astonished at the emotions with which I was impressed by it.

"Rely upon it, dear sister," said he, "our happiness consists in devoting our lives, and even our death, to the welfare of others. Of what avail would be the engagements into which we enter, or the sacrifices to which we are doomed, if they did not aim at soothing the sufferings of the unfortunate? Sweet is the hour of prayer; but where would be the delight of communing with God, without the conscious-

ness

ness of having deserved well of humanity? Virtuous actions revive and re-create piety; and the exercises of religion are the consolation, not the end and object of our lives. The good works which we perform upon earth, we place between us and Heaven; and it is then only, that the divine protection bespeaks its presence within the recesses of our hearts." Such, my dear Louisa, may be the advantages, such the utility of a religious life; such is the system which I am disposed to adopt, and which I am anxious to pursue.

Alas! if the unfortunate Valorbe had done me the same justice during his life, which he has done me at the moment of his death, I should be still free; but why regret the vows which I have made? They were extorted from me in a moment of delirious emotion: they were intended only to rescue me from the greatest of misfortunes; but still these same vows shall bind me more closely down to the performance of every duty which morality

prescribes; and if I devote every hour of the day to acts of humanity, may I not presume to hope that I shall be restored to tranquillity? No, my dear friend, my mind tells me, that I do not deserve continually to suffer; and if I but plan my life upon the model of perfect virtue, my agitated soul must one day be restored to a state of peace and serenity.

Are there not yet, my dear Louisa, in Languedoc or in Provence, some of those establishments of charity, such as I am desirous to find out? If so, I may perhaps be permitted to retire to one of them; and I might then close my life near you; for it must soon draw near its close.—Tell me, my dear sister, that you wish to see me once more; not that I doubt it, but because it soothes my heart to hear that wish repeated.

LETTER

LETTER II.

DELPHINE TO MAD^{LLE} D'ALBEMAR.

Abbey of Paradise, July 15th, 1792.

DO not stir from the place where you now are; do not quit the secret retreat that now shelters you: do not come near me, I beseech you; no, for Heaven's sake, do not come.— Such is the drift of your letter.

Is it you then who permit your patience to be exhausted by my misfortune? Is it you who can be so tired and disgusted with my errors and foibles as to refuse to stretch out to me a hand of protection? Believe me, Louisa, fled successively are all the tender illusions, vanished are all the fond hopes which I so much delighted to indulge; but if you be not every thing that is noble, generous, and good in this world, I do not know what I am myself. I can no longer form a correct judgment of any thing

thing; no longer attach myself to any thing. Heaven and earth are mingled and confounded in my eyes; scarcely knowing where I may safely tread, I call upon Nature to say how she would dispose of me, since she deprives me of the only support that still remains for my soul to rest upon. But no—it cannot be. You will doubtless unravel the mystery that runs through your letter. Fate, it is true, conceals a number of extraordinary events; but there is one to which it can never give birth—no; goodness can never be unkind—sincere friendship can never turn the back upon misfortune. No, Louisa; you can never cease to be an affectionate and generous friend! Awake then, my Louisa, think on your Delphine—some motive which I cannot divine has dictated your unaccountable refusal; but whatever that motive may be, it should have no weight with you.

Perhaps you imagine it would be more proper in me to remain where I am; that I had better not think of going to France.

Ah!

Ah! do not rend my heart for the sake of what you imagine to be good for me. The pain you have given me is far more excruciating than any you may wish to relieve me from: the chances of futurity are uncertain; but present pain is a real evil.

The more I peruse and examine your letter, the more I am convinced that it was not dictated by any stern, cold, calculating sentiment.—It betrays an emotion, an obscurity, a contradiction, which makes me apprehend for you, for myself, some great misfortune, which you likewise dread, but which you conceal from me.——Is Leonce ill?—Does any danger threaten him?

Would you believe it? I have become a prey to the most miserable superstitions, since your letter has struck my mind with such terror and dismay.—The last word which fell from M. de Valorbe's dying lips, expressed an anxiety that he might be buried in our church.—The nuns shrunk at firſt from the proposal, because a rumour

was spread abroad that he had laid violent hands upon himself—but I urged the request with such earnestness, that it was at length acquiesced in.—Indeed I felt it of the highest concern to me to pay this last homage to that unfortunate man—Yesterday evening I felt a strong inclination to visit his tomb.—Your letter strengthened my desire to attempt something to appease his shade.—I was full of apprehensions for Leonce—I felt it necessary to implore all those invisible powers to protect me, whom the unfortunate are so prone to call upon under the anguish of their unavailing sorrows. I arrived close by the tomb of M. de Valorbe. I shuddered at the profound silence which prevailed around a place where reposed a heart so impassioned; a man whose violence of feeling had brought him to an untimely grave.—I threw myself upon my knees, and bent me down upon the stone that pressed upon his ashes—long did I continue to bathe it with tears of pity,

pity, regret and fear.—As I raised myself from the tomb, the first impulse I felt, was to draw forth from my bosom, where I have always treasured it up, the portrait of Leonce: I felt anxious to justify to him the pity which I felt for M. de Valorbe's fate; but I found the portrait so altered, that I could not recognize him; and indeed the marble of M. de Valorbe's tomb, upon which I prostrated myself, had broken the portrait against my heart.

Pity me, Louisa: this circumstance, simple as it was, appeared to me of ill omen: it seemed as if, in the silence of the grave, M. de Valorbe struggled to avenge himself on his rival, and that Leonce was doomed one day to perish in my arms. Does that day draw near? Are you aware of it? and do you wish to hide it from me? Ah, cease to shew yourself so indifferent about my fate: no—I can never believe it; I can never permit myself to suspect your heart—yet the most gloomy phantoms, the cruellest chimeras rise

rise before my mind, to explain what I find it otherwise impossible to comprehend.

LETTER III.

MADAME DE LEBENSEI TO MAD^{LLE} D'ALBEMAR.

Paris, July 15, 1792.

THE physicians have declared, that if Matilda persisted in suckling her child, her obstinacy must prove fatal to her, and that perhaps her child even may not survive her—A confessor, and a physician brought by the confessor, assert a contrary opinion, and Matilda will listen to them only. —Leonce got into a rage with the priest who directs her conscience, and throwing himself upon his knees, most earnestly beseeched her to forego her resolution; but hitherto his entreaties have proved ineffectual:

ineffectual : she has taken it into her head that every woman who ails a little, gets herself advised not to suckle her child, that she may be relieved from the performance of a duty—and nothing in the world can prevail upon her to renounce that idea. She has always some set phrase at her fingers ends as an answer to every objection.—She says that when she feels herself really ill, she will desist from suckling; but that, as at present she is not conscious of any pain, she has no motive to induce her to acquiesee in what is asked. She is warned of the alteration in her person, of the alarming sympoms that mark the state of her health ; she is even threatened with the ill consequences of her obstinacy to her child : her answer is, that she does not believe a tittle of it—that the mother's milk is the fittest nourishment for the child; that a change of it might prove fatal, and that she ought to know better than any one what is good for her son and herself. With these two or three sentences,

ces, she answers every observation that is made to her: she continually repeats them without any variation; so that, as M. de Lebensei remarked to me, one is sensible of the resistance of her obstinacy, as of a physical obstacle against which the force of reasoning would be exerted in vain.

What more melancholy spectacle, however, than that perverseness of judgment, that real and radical folly, that clothes itself under the most rigid and regular formalities! It deprives Leonce of all hope, especially for his son: I nevertheless indulge a hope that he may triumph over Matilda's resistance: she loves him, and that is the only sentiment against which her will would struggle in vain.—M. de Lebensei does not leave Leonce; he does not always put himself in Matilda's way; but he is almost continually in the apartment of M. de Mondoville, endeavouring to cheer and console him. For these eight days past Leonce has never uttered the name of Madame d'Albemar.—I admire

that mark of pity and respect for his wife's situation; yet never, do I believe, was his mind more occupied with Delphine. Accept, Mademoiselle, the tribute of my tenderest regard.

ELIZA DE LEBENSEI.

LETTER IV.

MONSIEUR DE LEBENSEI TO MAD[LLE] D'ALBEMAR.

Paris, July 21, 1792.

YESTERDAY the wife of Leonce departed this life. It will be your duty, Mademoiselle, to communicate these tidings to Madame d'Albemar.—I cannot forbear expressing to you the deep concern I felt for the last moments of the youthful Matilda; and satisfied I am that your generous friend, far

far from blaming me, will participate in my emotions.

For a month past, the obstinacy of Madame de Mondoville had disgusted every one about her — Leonce above all, who trembled for his child, and who was at a loss what part to act, torn between the fear of driving Matilda to despair, and the danger to which his son was exposed: he continually made Matilda sensible, that although he repressed his feelings, yet they were deeply wounded—when about four days ago, a night more alarming than any she had yet passed, convinced Matilda of her situation; upon which she sent for Leonce; and, delivering his son into his arms, she said to him—"It is very possible that I may have been wrong in continuing so long to resist your advice; but the opinions I have opposed to yours have such a sovereign empire over my mind, that at the age of twenty I unreluctantly sacrificed to them a life which it was your study to render happy.—Forgive me, if

your

your wishes did not immediately obtain from me what I could not bring myself to do, in order to preserve my own life.—I sadly fear that this pertinacity of disposition on my part, may have given you a dislike to the religion I profess: if so, that would be the bitterest thought which I could carry with me to the grave.—No, do not impute my faults to my religion: it had not the power to correct them all; but, without its aid, they must have caused my misfortune, and that of many others; it is that religion which arms me with strength to quit with courage, what God himself permitted me to look upon as happiness, an intimate union with the only man I loved upon earth."—These last words sunk deep in the heart of Leonce: Matilda perceived it; and taking his hand, "Believe me," said she, "this heart is not so cold as you imagine; but was it not my duty to enure it to restraint? A religious life is a work of continued effort; and too prone a propensity to indulge the purest inclinations, may

may tend to estrange the soul from her God."

Three days after this conversation, Matilda, feeling herself extremely ill, expressed a wish to speak alone to Leonce, that she might communicate to him all that had passed between her and Madame d'Albemar. She put into her husband's hand the letter she received from Delphine—a letter which so nobly expresses all the generous sentiments of that angelic soul. Leonce, who always retained a sort of resentment at the departure of Delphine, was impressed with the liveliest emotions, on learning the cause of it; and, in spite of all his efforts, he found it impossible, as he declared to me, to conceal from Matilda the admiration he felt for the conduct of Madame d'Albemar—"You love her," said Matilda softly to him; "you love her still. Well! you cannot but acknowledge that God protects me—believe in him, Leonce, and do not frustrate the prayers which I daily put up to heaven

heaven in your behalf." These words, which breathed such fond fidelity, filled the heart of Leonce with the most poignant remorse: he cast himself at the feet of Matilda's bed, and bedewed her hands with his tears. Matilda somewhat recovered her strength, well pleased with the emotions that worked in the breast of Leonce—"You will marry Mad[lle] d'Albemar, will you not?" continued Matilda; "she possesses a soul full of kindness and generosity; but it grieves me to think that the happiness of both of you depends very much upon men, and upon circumstances. You take honour for your guide; sentiment is her's—but you do not possess within yourself a prop and support upon which you may securely rest. Take heed, Leonce, God wishes to be our first friend, our only master; and an entire submission to his will is the only means of remaining unenslaved by any other yoke."—"Leonce," added she, with an agitated voice, "Leonce! fain would I bear with

me the idea that you are to be happy; but much do I fear, that you have not taken the road to happiness. If I could but prevail upon you to bring up our child in the principles that I have been taught— but, alas! the poor child; who knows that he can live any time? Ere long, perhaps, and he will be an angel in the bosom of God."—Here she suddenly stopt short, as if startled at some idea that shot through her mind; and she eagerly called for her confessor. Leonce imagined her anxiety arose from having too long continued to suckle her child. He went to her confessor, and said to him: "Sir, you have been the cause of much mischief to us; endeavour to repair it as far as lies in your power: relieve Matilda's mind from all intrusion of remorse."—"I shall do my duty," replied the confessor, as he entered Matilda's chamber. This confessor is a man actuated at the same time by fanaticism and by cunning: convinced himself of the truth of the opinion he professes,

fesses, yet resorting to all the art which perfidy itself could exert, in order to impress that conviction upon the mind of others—sternly unmoved by every thing that would disgust or disconcert him, but ever active to follow up whatever success he may obtain—stamping, in fine, with a perseverance which nothing can wear out, that religious dignity which boasts of humiliations, and which places its pride in sufferings and mortifications.

He remained for several hours shut up with Matilda; and when Leonce returned to her, she appeared more firm and serene, without manifesting any anxiety to speak with him alone. During the whole of the night which preceded her death, the young and beautiful Matilda courageously submitted to all those ceremonies with which the catholics are wont to besiege the dying. I had withdrawn into a corner of the room, behind the servants, who listened on their knees to the prayers usually read over the dying. I perceived, in a mirror, the bed

of Matilda, and I observed her confessor frequently presenting the cross before her dying lips. At this sight I felt an agitation within me, which all the efforts my will could exert were unable to subdue—"Is it right," said I to myself, "thus to draw round our last moments such a gloomy apparatus; to surpass in frightfulness the terrors of death itself, and to strike with so many terrific ideas the imaginations of those who are yielding their last breath? The sacrifice is scarcely so much to be dreaded as the preparations! Were it not better to let the end of man come on like the close of day, and make the sleep of death resemble, as far as may be, the sleep of life?—Sure I am, at least, that he who dies regretted by all he loves, must be anxious to get rid of all this funereal pomp. Affection accompanies him till his last farewel: he deposits his memory in the hearts of those who survive him, while the tears of his friends solicit and call down upon him the benevolent regard of heaven; but the unfortunate,

unfortunate, who is left to die unattended, may perhaps be desirous to have his death attested by some striking solemnity, that the ministers of God should chaunt around him those soul-impressing prayers, which bespeak the sympathies of heaven with the sufferings of humanity, and that the most awful mystery of nature, death, should not be accomplished, without the due accompaniments of pity and of terror.

Leonce remained during the whole of the night at the foot of Matilda's bed, wholly absorbed in the deep impressions by which his soul was overwhelmed. He has since told me, that while he observed a woman so young and so beautiful thus resign herself to death with calmness so unruffled, he could not but ask himself why, under the pains that assail the heart, we were so desirous to live, since death could cause so little dread even amidst all the enjoyments that minister in life to the most splendid prosperity. So true is it, that in the most happy condition man

always feels a secret disgust at existence, which consoles our regret for touching at our end, however short may have been the journey.

You are well acquainted with the powerful expression which characterises the phisionomy of Leonce, but particularly the singular charm and energy with which it depicts the majesty of grief. He had passed the night in one and the same attitude, standing up erect and motionless—his hair hung loose and disordered, and at that moment his beauty had something in it truly striking. Matilda, who for a long time had her eyes closed, then happened to open them, and the first object that caught her sight was Leonce. " Good God!" she exclaimed, " is it my husband, or a messenger from heaven that I behold!" She had scarcely uttered these words, when to the blanc paleness that overspread her face a vivid red succeeded: she called her confessor, and spoke to him for some minutes in a low tone

tone of voice. I could only gather a few words of his answer, viz. "Yes, madam, you may bid a laſt farewel to M. de Mondoville; but after that you should remain alone with us." "Leonce," said then Matilda, as she pressed her husband's hand between both her own, "Leonce," ſhe repeated again, with a look that mingled in it at once both the shades of death and the liveliest sentiment that can animate life, "I have always loved you, let this be the only recollection that you cherish of me. Has not Jesus Christ himself said, that *to those who have loved much, much shall be forgiven?* Do not slight my memory, do not, without trembling awe, trample on the tomb of the woman who loved but you alone upon earth." Leonce melted into tears, and rushed towards Matilda. In a few minutes after the confessor drew near the bed, and said to Leonce, "Retire, sir, Mad. de Mondoville has now only to think of prayer, and of the dread concerns of eternity." Leonce rose up with indig-

 nation.

nation. Matilda foresaw that he was going to burst into expressions of anger, and haftened to say to him, "Leonce, it is my last, it is my greatest sacrifice; but it must be so!" Leonce, overwhelmed by this order, withdrew, and his eyes beheld Matilda no more. She expired an hour after.

From that moment Leonce never once quitted his son, whose health is in a most perilous state; and I am pretty well convinced that he has no notion of leaving him at the present moment; but at the same time I make no doubt, but that if his son were better, he would set out immediately to rejoin Delphine. He has not as yet mentioned her name to me; but this morning, as we were standing together at the window, the moment the day began to dawn, he said to me, "Remark my friend, see how the sun rises on the side of Switzerland; all his rays dart on us from that quarter." He then stopped short, apprehensive of betraying his secret thoughts;

thoughts; but in his face it was easy to read the emotions of despair which he was vainly anxious to conceal.

Pray let me know where Delphine resides, I must acquaint Leonce with her abode. Ah! no obstacle stands now in the way of his happiness! May the unfortunate Matilda pardon me! But I cannot but thank heaven for having united together two beings who loved one another, and who shall henceforward be separated no more! Eliza and I present our best respects and tenderest affection.

HENRY DE LEBENSEI.

LETTER V.

MADEMOISELLE D'ALBEMAR TO M. LEBENSEI.

Montpellier, July 27th.

YOU must by no means, sir, allow Leonce to set out for Switzerland: he can think of nothing more dangerous, more

more fatal. I muſt disclose a frightful secret to you, a secret which blasts all our hopes at the very instant when chance had removed every obstacle. The persecuting addresses of M. de Valorbe, the inhuman selfishness of a woman; in fine, a long concatenation of circumſtances, the ascendancy of which was inevitable, have driven Mad. d'Albemar to the most melancholy of resolutions. She is now a nun in the abbey of Paradise, four leagues from Zurich. M. de Valorbe, the cause of all Delphine's pains, died after having loſt every hope, and at a moment when he could repair none of the mischief he had done. Mad. d'Albemar, I am sure, but too bitterly repents the rash vows that tie her down for ever. And, nevertheless, she is not yet aware of Matilda's death! I cannot reflect without horror on the state of desperation to which Leonce and Delphine will be reduced, when the one learns that he is free, and when the other finds that she is so no longer. It is utterly impossible

impossible to prevent their coming to the knowledge of what has happened; but we must prepare them for it, if indeed they can learn their fate, and survive the knowledge of it.

As I am confined to my bed by rather an unlucky accident, you will have the goodness, sir, to perform, in my ſtead, the offices of friendſhip. You have more strength and determination of character about you than I can pretend to: your advice must be of much more use to them than my tears. Assist and comfort our friends: never were they so truly unfortunate and unhappy!

LETTER VI.

M. DE LEBENSEI TO MADEMOISELLE D'ALBEMAR.

Paris, August 2d.

GOOD Heavens! what tidings do you send me! and do you know that he has this morning left me before your letter arrived. I will follow him: in about two hours I shall have my passport, and then I will be at his heels. I am at a loss to know what to say to him, or what I shall do for him; but at least he shall not be left alone. Unfortunate man! what fatal events have preceded the misfortune that is now to fall upon him? The day before yesterday he received a letter, informing him that a violent disease had deprived him of his mother; and two hours after, his son expired in his arms! At the very moment that poor child ceased to breathe, Leonce threw himself on its cradle in convulsive

vulsive fits of grief, which filled me with apprehensions for his life. "Now, my dear friend," said he, "all my ties are burst asunder: yes, all but one,—and, if that one still remains, I am content to live; yes, to live, barbarous man that I am, upon the grave of my whole family, for love may still be able to render me happy." Alas! I listened to those words, ignorant of the horrors with which they were fraught. I attended only to the hope, which he was then invoking to his aid; from that moment he did not once utter the name of Delphine.

The day after, he followed the burial of his son, to the church-yard of Bellerive; where he wished to have him interred. I accompanied him. Nothing is more affecting than the honours that attend the funeral of a child: there is nothing gloomy or funereal in the ceremony; it would seem that he should have best claims to our pity, who is deprived of life before he has enjoyed its bloom; and, nevertheless, I felt

in-

inclined to a directly contrary opinion. What deepens the gloom of death, are the long pains that precede it, the disappointment of fond hopes, the inutility of painful efforts, that have no other effect than that of deepening the abyss into which time and misfortune conspire to plunge mankind. I am much pleased with those words of Harvey, upon the grave of a child---*He found the cup of life too bitter, and turned away his head.* Happy infant, to be rescued from the trial!—poor child, what will become of thy father? wilt thou pray for him in Heaven? will thy mother join thee there? O! is there any mind so proud and self-confident, as not to call upon the departed to come to the assistance of the living whom they loved? Where is the heart that does not invoke what it knows not, while it sinks under the weight of sufferings that oppress it? Alas! now that I know the fate with which Leonce was threatened, I am inclined to think, that the expression I observed upon

his

his countenance was a presage of it: it gladdened with sudden rays of hope, that in an instant after set in a night of grief, as if the image of happiness had appeared to him, and a secret voice had forbidden his soul to confide in it.

When the ceremony was concluded, he threw himself upon his knees on the sod that wrapt the remains of his son. I scarcely had ever before attended but to the grief of a mother. When I now beheld the masculine expression of a father's sorrow; when I looked at that young man, weeping over an infant child; when I observed that erect and lofty spirit, broken down and dejected; I was deeply affected. Indeed women are destined to shed tears; but when we see men let them fall, some unwonted nerve is touched, and the sensation suddenly vibrates to the inmost fibre of the heart.

As we came forth from the church, Leonce requested me to walk with him to the garden of Bellerive: on reaching the gate

gate of the park, he leaned himself against one of the bars, without opening the gate and, after a few minutes hesitation, he said to me, "Now it would wound me to recall to mind the past; and who can say that the future belongs to me? who can know it? and without the encouragement of that hope, how is it possible rashly to face this place! My child," said he, casting his eyes upon the church of Bellerive, "my darling child! thou restest near the spot where thy father enjoyed the only happy moments of his life: all the hopes of my heart are buried here. O destiny! what wilt thou restore to me?" As he pronounced these latter words, his voice faultered; but you know what a command he has over himself; he immediately resumed his spirits, withdrew from the garden, and beckoned to me to get into the carriage with him.

He did not utter a word on the way; but as soon as we reached his house, he informed me that he should set out during

ing the night. "You may surmise where I am going," said he; "my son, my wife, my mother, are no more; there remains for me but one object of hope upon earth; and if I have preserved that object, I can still live. Should it be torn from me, what right could Heaven itself claim over a being deprived of every thing that was dear to him? Farewel." In a few hours after Leonce was gone, and it was only this morning that I received your letter: I took my determination in a moment: I will follow Leonce, and as soon as I come up with him, I will shape my conduct as his situation may suggest. But, even should I be able to point out some salutary resource to him, would his mode of thinking permit him to resort to it? I must now set out in search of him: he should have some friend near him at this the cruellest moment of his life. Mad. de Lebensei has consented to my departure. I have obtained a passport for a month; my next letter shall be dated from Switzerland.

land. Adieu, Mademoiselle: adieu, thou kind but unhappy friend! what can we do to save Delphine and Leonce? what advice will they follow, should we venture to offer them any?

LETTER VII.

LEONCE TO M. BARTON.

Lausanne, Aug. 5.

I ARRIVED here in less than three days: I may now breathe awhile, since I find myself in a town where she has so lately been. I have not as yet obtained precise information of her present abode; but, as I am close upon her footsteps, I may expect soon to come up with her.

My dear Barton, did you but know how much I am ashamed of my present state of mind! I have just lost a mother whom I cherished, a wife whom I esteemed, a son who inspired me with all

all the tender affections of a father; and after all, shall I confess it to you? there are moments when my heart leaps with joy. The mere idea of seeing Delphine once more, of finding her free and disengaged, of uniting my fate with her's, that idea blots out and triumphs over every other. Do not, however, imagine that I have but slightly felt the misfortunes that have befallen me: my situation is an extraordinary one: my heart, however, is not hardened; on the contrary, never was it more susceptible of every tender feeling! The deepest sadness centers within my soul, nor can I be a moment alone without melting into tears. As soon as I find Delphine, I shall begin to indulge my grief; I shall weep prostrate at her feet; for a length of time, even though in her company, I shall not be able to console myself. But, under my present expectations, what I feel can neither be pain nor pleasure: it is a kind of agitation which,

in

in the tumult it produces, mingles and confounds hope with sorrow.

You once knew me to be possessed of some strength and resolution; but now I am weakness itself. I tremble like a woman at every sudden noise or motion. I am already overpowered by the fate that awaits me; so immense is the distance between despair and the happiness I now look for. I even dread the emotions that must arise in my breast at her presence; and I sometimes surprise myself, in wishing for an eternal sleep, rather than undergo those violent, lacerating, moral shocks which nature shudders to endure. Ah! Delphine; what have I said? it is thou; yes, thou only who cans't close the bleeding wounds of my heart! The sound of thy voice, that voice which so faithfully interprets love, will restore to me in a moment all the comforts, all the enjoyments of life. Thou still remainest to me! thou, whom I loved so tenderly: whence then

proceed

proceed my alarms? My dear friend! do I not know that she loves me? Am I not thoroughly acquainted with her disposition; a disposition that is truth, tenderness, and attachment itself? I am full of fears; because, beholding her again seems to me a supernatural happiness. These eight months past I have been invoking her image in vain; for these eight months past every moment was a sting of pain to me; I no longer trust to happiness: but these doubts arise from a weakness. Did not a time exist when I saw her?—a time when I passed three hours with her every day? Why may not these hours return? They have blessed my life; may they not bless it once more?

LETTER VIII.

LEONCE TO M. BARTON.

Zurich, Aug. 7.

I AM within six leagues of Mad d'Albemar; I have just been informed so almost for certain. From what I have learnt, I make no doubt but that it was her who about three months ago retired to the abbey of Paradise. Tender-hearted Delphine! All the time of our separation has she passed in the most sequestered retreat. Since she quitted Zurich, no mention has ever once been made of her; there is even no one here who knows her under her real name: but her generous conduct in all the details of life, the impression which her charms has made upon every one who has seen her, do not leave a possibility that I should labour under a mistake. I have recognised the marks of her angelic disposition; my heart tells me

me so. It is now seven in the evening: it is not usual for the convents to be opened during the night; but to-morrow with day-break I shall see her—to-morrow.

O my dear master! under what aspect does the future dawn upon me! how does hope expand and elevate my soul to the most noble thoughts: how gently does it dispose me to virtue! Virtue, indeed, will be easy to me, when I shall have that angel for my wife! To learn it from her shall be one of my duties. What, a duty! O ye endless felicities, ye tutelary deities! how my veins throb for happiness. Pardon me, ye departed—I shall perhaps soon rejoin you: a life of such happiness cannot be long; but from this moment let me lose myself in inebriating dreams.

P. S. I am this moment informed, that Henry de Lebensei is arrived from Paris, and that he wishes to see me. What can be the motive of his journey? I love M. de Lebensei; but I would rather, I know not

not why, that he had not come. I do not want to confide myself to any one; my soul is quite filled with itself: it is painful to me to talk. It is to you alone, my dear friend, that I feel a pleasure in unbosoming myself. How sorry am I that M. de Lebensei is here!

LETTER IX.

M. DE LEBENSEI TO MADEMOISELLE D'ALBEMAR.

Aug. 7th.

IT is now midnight; I saw Leonce this evening, but could not prevail upon myself to acquaint him with his misfortune. There is one resource left him, had he the courage to embrace it. I will endeavour to prepare him for it. I shall see Mad. d'Albemar in a few hours, and do all in my power to relieve my unfortunate friends. No, never did any event of my own life so powerfully agitate my heart!

Since

Since seven o'clock in the evening I have been at Zurich. Leonce arrived there on the same day. I immediately found out where he resided, and sent him a card to inform him of my arrival, and in a quarter of an hour after I waited upon him. He received me kindly, but with very visible signs of perturbation. I gave him to understand that business personal to myself had obliged me to come to Zurich. He paid very little attention to what I said: at length I hinted to him that I had received some accounts from you; and the mention of your name immediately aroused his attention; and he told me that he ſhould set out at four o'clock in the morning, that he might be at the abbey of Paradise the moment the gates should be opened: he added, that he was next to certain that he should there find Delphine. I shuddered at his project; but had the presence of mind to tell him, without betraying the least hesitation, that you had informed me in your last,

that Mad. d'Albemar had removed from that convent a fortnight ago, and that she had retired to a country seat near Frankfort. On hearing this he was much agitated, and observed, "What! four days more, when I expected it should be to-morrow?" And, in saying this, he laid his hand upon his forehead, as if deeply struck with grief. "If you chuse," said I, "I will accompany you as far as Frankfort." I proposed this journey merely with the intention of gaining a few days more. "You are very kind," he replied, "perhaps I may accept your offer; but of that we shall say a word to-morrow morning." I wished to press the matter, and get somewhat of more insight into the plan of his projects; but he eyed me with a sort of uneasiness which pained me; I resolved first, to go without his knowledge to Mad. d'Albemar's, to warn her, at all hazards, of the arrival of Leonce. Having taken this resolution, I bethought myself of giving one day's more repose

to

to my distracted friend, and I accordingly proposed a walk with him on the borders of the Lake of Zurich: he assented, but did not utter a word during the whole of the way.

As we came to a row of poplars which lead to Gessner's Tomb, we advanced to the brink of the lake. Leonce, at one time employed himself in contemplating the starry heavens, at another the watery mirror by which they were reflected. "My good friend," said he, "do you believe that I am at length going to be happy?"—and he then paused in expectation of my answer. I bowed my head in token of assent, but was utterly unable to articulate a word. He did not seem to observe what passed within me, so thoroughly was he absorbed in his own thoughts. "And why should I not be so?" continued he. Do you imagine that those who have not bent their attention upon notions of religion are to become the objects of the wrath of the Divinity, of

whose particular attributes they may have been ignorant? So various are the mysteries connected with man, and foreign to man himself, that it is hard to conceive why he should be punished for not comprehending them. Is he to be condemned upon earth never to possess what he loves? If he has rigidly complied with the rules of morality, if he has humanely assisted his fellow-men, if he has been vigilant to keep alive the flame of virtue in his breast, has he not paid due homage to whatever is most excellent in nature, under what name or title soever he may have acknowledged the principle of all good? It is true, I confess, that I have annexed too much importance to public esteem and opinion; but, in order to obtain them, have I employed any criminal means? "I may have been criminal in one thing," said he, "I have harboured suspicions injurious to Delphine! I might have married her, but I took Matilda for my wife! Matilda, whom I did not love, and

and for whom I did not procure the happiness she deserved. "My dear Henry," continued Leonce, with a more plaintive voice, "where is the man who, upon examining his life, can judge himself deserving of happiness? And yet, how should he aspire to happiness, unless he deserve it?"—"Are there not," said I to him, "a number of humane and generous actions in our lives, that may well inspire us with confidence?"—"Oh!" replied he, "is the source of what is virtuous alway perfectly pure? We look to the applause of mankind as a reward of our good actions, and thus is it, that virtue is never unmixed; but in evil, there is no admixture that corrects its nature. My recollection takes a retrospect of the scenes of my youth, and they exhibit many transgressions, of which I was not before aware. Am I to be happy! Is it true that I am again to behold Delphine, that my destiny and her's are to be for ever linked together? I am weak, very weak

 indeed;

indeed; the least thing that appears ominous, your very silence when I question you, are sufficient to alarm me. Here I endeavoured to apologize. "Let us sit down," said he, "I feel a most painful palpitation of the heart; talk to me, I am no longer able to speak; but take care you say nothing to disturb me: yes, I beseech you, let me, if you can, enjoy a moment's calm.

You may easily conceive, Mad^lle. what I must have suffered on beholding my unfortunate friend, thus unconsciously brought to the verge of death, without being allowed either to console or admonish him, for a word might have sufficed to convulse his whole frame. I was anxious to discover how he felt disposed respecting the subject that then occupied my thoughts, and I asked him whether, in order to possess Delphine, he was prepared, once for all, were it necessary, to incur the universal censure of society. "Why put to me such a question," said he, as he arose

with apparent indignant feeling! "Can there be a more honourable choice than that of Madame d'Albemar? Where is there a character more truly estimable? What do you know? What do you suspect?"—"I know nothing," said I interrupting him, "that does not tend to the honour of her whom you love; but, amidst the most perplexing moments that can agitate our lives, I would fain see men capable of reflection, and obsequious to reason."—"I am not in that mood of mind," said he abruptly, and so saying he retired. I followed him: the native goodness of his disposition brought him back; and as he advanced towards me, he stretched out his hand, saying, "You, who a few months ago could so happily hit upon what I was anxious to hear, why, since you have been here, do you place my mind in a much less agreeable situation?" "It is," replied I, "because expectation is drawn out too long. Let us set out to-morrow for Frankfort."—

 "Yes

"Yes, very well," said he, "I shall see you to-morrow," upon which he left me and returned home.

In a few hours I shall be at the Abbey of Paradise; Mad. d'Albemar will, I trust, support with more fortitude the tidings which I bring her: she has not ceased even for a moment to suffer; but what alarms me for Leonce is, that he still grasps at the shadow of happiness with confidence and eagerness. In my next, I will acquaint you in what situation I shall have found Mad. d'Albemar, and what advice she is likely to adopt in her misfortune. Ah! would to God she would confide altogether in my counsels; her situation might then perhaps be not wholly without a remedy.

I do not stop to tell you, Mademoiselle, how much I am afflicted by what you suffer! I do more than pity you; I feel as poignantly as you do yourself.

LETTER X.

M. DE LEBENSEI TO MADEMOISELLE D'ALBEMAR.

From near the Abbey of Paradise,
Aug. 9th.

ALL my efforts have proved fruitless: what I dreaded most has taken place. Were it not for the recollection of my wife and my child, I really doubt whether my reason could have enabled me to endure the frightful spectacle of distress and pain of which I am a witness. Leonce, it seems, did not trust altogether to what I had mentioned to him respecting the pretended departure of Delphine for Frankfort, or at least he was anxious to procure what information he could about her in a place where she had lived for a considerable time. Yesterday, without telling me any thing of his intention, he set out for the abbey of Paradise: I was informed

informed of it a quarter of an hour after, at the very moment I was mounting my horse to make the same journey. I flattered myself I should be able to come up with him before he arrived, and never, I believe, did any one urge greater speed than I then did. The sun began to rise, and I was traversing the finest country in the world without diftinguishing a single object. I at length perceived Leonce at about a quarter of a league distance from the Abbey, but about two hundred paces from me. I redoubled my exertions to reach him; and, as if dreading I should join him, he so pressed forward his horse, that it was impossible for me to get within a distance to be heard by him. At length he alighted at the gate of the convent, and said, as I afterwards was informed, that he came on the part of Mad[lle] d'Albemar, and that he wished to speak to a lady who lived at the convent. By some unfortunate chance or other, the portress recollected having heard the

name

name frequently mentioned by Delphine; and she immediately went up stairs to acquaint her that some one called for her in the name of Mad^{lle} d'Albemar: and I just arrived when Leonce was informed that the person he asked for was ready to receive him.

I attempted to stop him at the moment he was ascending the first step of the staircase of the convent. "For heaven's sake!" cried I, "listen to me, Leonce; do, stop a moment."—"Stop!" said he, turning back with an angry look; "where is the man who dare propose it to me?"—"Do, pray, listen to me," said I again—"you don't know. . . . ." "I know that Delphine is here," said he, furiously interrupting me; "and that you would endeavour to conceal it! that is too much; not a word more from you!" As he uttered these last words, he opened the door: it was then too late to attempt any thing; fate had decided the matter.

As Leonce entered the parlour, Delphine

appeared shrouded in her black veil behind the fatal grate. At this sight Leonce was seized with a convulsive tremor: he fixed his eyes alternately on Delphine and me, with looks which almost, at the same instant, solicited and deprecated an explanation of what he beheld. "Is she then a nun? has she taken the veil?" exclaimed he. At the sound of his voice, Delphine recognized Leonce. She stretched her arms towards him: he threw himself forcibly against the grate, which he took hold of, and shook with a spasmodic effort, which it was impossible to behold without shuddering, saying with a voice, the tones of which can never quit my memory, "Matilda is dead, Delphine; can you not be mine?"—"No," said she; "but I am willing to die:"—and down she fell motionless on the ground.

Leonce viewed her for some time with a fixed lingering look that witnessed the deepest grief: then, turning towards me, he rested himself upon my arm, and sat himself

himself down with apparent calmness, which was sadly contrasted by the most shocking alteration in his countenance. He attempted to speak to me: but his teeth clattered so violently against each other, and so confused were his ideas, that it was impossible for me to comprehend what he said. As Delphine came to herself, she sent to request the abbess would permit her to go into the outward room. Mad. de Ternan, alarmed and dismayed at her nephew's arrival, could scarce venture to shew herself, or to refuse Delphine's request. My unfortunate friend was no longer able to hear or to see any thing. When Delphine got the grate opened, she instantly flung herself into Leonce's arms, pressing his icy hands within her own, and lavishing upon him every epithet that love and tenderness can suggest. Leonce sufficiently recovered his senses to enable him to recognize his friend, and, taking her into his arms, he pressed her to his heart with such impassioned emotions, with such looks

looks of fond enthusiasm, that I involuntarily lifted my hands to heaven, imploring the divine goodness to unite them together! My prayer perhaps was heard! Leonce, locking within his trembling hands the trembling hands of Delphine, and labouring under the delirium of a fever, which has not since left him, repeatedly said to her, "whence comes it, my tender friend, that thou thus appearest before me covered with that veil? how gloomy the omen which that lugubrious habiliment portends! Is it not in festive garments that our nuptials should be celebrated? Oh! loose thyself from those dismal shades that surround thee; appear before me all robed in white, beaming in all the bloom of thy youth and beauty: come, thou spouse of my heart, thou in whom alone my life can find repose: why, why doest thou thus inundate my breast with tears; with tears that scald me? what causes thy grief? art thou not mine, mine, mine for ever. . . . .?" His voice faultered

faultered and became weaker every moment, as he endeavoured to repeat those doleful words: he leant upon my shoulder, and then trembling swooned away.

Delphine then recognised me, and said, "Behold his situation: you see I am the cause of his death---I cannot comprehend what sort of being I am; wherever I go, I carry misery and misfortune with me; whatever I attempt to do proves fatal. Ah, save him, save him!" "Think on it," I said to her; "your vows are not irrevocable; they may be safely broken; they shall be. . . . . . ." At these words she froze with horror; she heard, but did not recollect them. She propped the drooping head of her friend upon her bosom, and sent me for assistance. I returned with two of the portresses of the convent: but all our efforts to recal Leonce to life were at first ineffectual. Delphine, whose alarm increased every moment, folded Leonce within her arms, endeavouring to support, to revive him, repeating again and

and again to him, with that unchecked effusion of tenderness which exalts a woman into a celestial being, a being that expresses and breathes nothing but love, "My good friend, my lover, thou guardian angel of my life, open thine eyes: wilt thou not hearken to that voice of love that calls upon thee, to the well known voice of thy Delphine. We shall expire together; but do, do come to thyself for an instant, that thou mayest once more tell me that thou lovest me: dost thou not feel my heart heave and beat against thine? my hand gently press thy hand? I scarcely know what I am, or what are the ties that bind me; all I know is, that my soul is free, and that it adores Leonce. Is there no power then in the excess of feeling which overwhelms me! that life which consumes and wastes me, cannot I transfuse it into thy breast?—Leonce! Leonce!" On hearing these accents he opened his eyes; but he soon shut them again, stretching out his hand to drive away even Delphine,

phine, as if he found no relief but in the stupor of death.

I could not but observe the embarrassment of the nuns who witnessed this affecting scene; and I resolved to get Leonce conveyed to a house adjoining the convent, where every assistance could be administered to him. Delphine did not oppose the order I gave to that effect; and when the unfortunate Leonce was carried away, without recovering his senses, she then fell upon her knees at the threshold of the door, she followed him with her eyes as far as she could keep sight of him; then raised herself, and returned into the convent.

From that moment I did not quit Leonce; nor did he cease to be delirious: the physicians, however, gave me hopes of his recovery. In a few days I will acquaint you, Mademoiselle, with what steps I take to assist our much distressed friends: I must collect my thoughts and raise my mind to the important resolution which I have

have to propose to them. Meantime, no care and attention shall be wanting on my part to preserve their lives. Do not grieve too much at being so far removed from them: please to be assured that my friendship shall omit nothing that may contribute to their relief.

LETTER XI.

M. DE LEBENSEI TO MADEMOISELLE D'ALBEMAR.

From near the Abbey of Paradise,
August 11th 1792.

IT is impossible for Leonce to survive his misfortune, and certain I am that he has resolved to put an end to his life. He has questioned me repeatedly respecting the account which Delphine had given me of the events that induced her to take the veil. One circumstance seems to be ever uppermost in his mind, and that is, the terrible

terrible apprehension under which Delphine laboured that her reputation should be blasted. He is sensible that it was principally on his account that she could not endure the idea of being suspected, and he considers himself as the author of his own misfortunes. His fever has subsided, but it is because he has taken his resolution, and that his mind is now composed. He informed me, with a solemn air, that in four days he should have a secret interview with Delphine. "Mad. de Ternan," said he, "cannot refuse me that favour, after all the evil she has done me: she fears me, she dreads to speak to me; she will not inconsiderately venture to throw me into a passion. Yes, I must see Delphine near that church where she permitted the remains of M. de Valorbe to be deposited."

I know Leonce thoroughly; I know his character, his passion, his grief; I am at a loss, however, to know what is fittest

for me to say to him in his present situation that can induce him to consent to live; but I know him too well to expect that he will lend an ear to any thing. Delphine, you are well aware, will not endure to live a day after Leonce; and am I thus to permit these excellent creatures to rush upon their fate?—No; let all the prejudices of the world rise up and upbraid me; I heed them not: and confident I am that I perform a good action by endeavouring to reconcile to life two beings formed to be virtuous and deserving to be happy. I disregard those who would blame me: their reproaches cannot reach me in the asylum of my heart, where I am shielded by self-approbation; they shall never shake that perfect conviction of the understanding which also acts as a conscience for an enlightened man. In two days you shall be informed, Madlle. with the issue of my project: I venture to hope you will approve of it. I stand in need of your approbation,

tion, and the more I raise myself above the reach of vain clamour, the more do I require the countenance of my friends.

LETTER XII.

M. DE LEBENSEI TO MADEMOISELLE D'ALBEMAR.

From near the Abbey of Paradise,
Aug. 13.

I FANCY my project has succeeded; I refer it however to the decision of your judgment. Mad. d'Albemar has particularly recommended to me to acquaint you with every circumstance. I went to see her yesterday morning. "Leonce," said I to her, "is going to cut short his life; his resolution is irrevocably fixed: are you desirous to save him?" "Heavens!" cried she, "how can you speak to me thus? Have I any other hope but that of dying with him? what other can I indulge? what do you mean by endeavouring to raise such violent emotions in my breast?

breast? Let me die in resignation to my fate." "You have made your vows," replied I, "without conforming with any of the prescribed formalities; you have been cruelly surprised into them; and I am firmly persuaded that the most rigidly religious scruples would justify you in re-asserting your liberty, if the means were in your hands: these means I now propose to you. There is a country, and that is France, where by law all monastic vows have been abolished; come and live there with Leonce, and, bidding defiance, with him, to every absurd prejudice, be both of you united together for ever in the face of approving Heaven." "What do you propose to me?" cried she with a frightful tremor, "can I consent to such a proposal without shame? what, do you imagine I can? do you think it possible?"—"Do you recollect," said I, "that about a year since, when I wrote to you on the possibility of a divorce, your answer was, that you knew of only one duty, a duty from

from which all others were derived, and that was, to do the greatest possible good, and never to injure any person on earth. I now call upon you to fulfil that duty; and, indeed, whom do you injure by breaking those senseless vows, which nothing could extort from you but the gripe of despair? And is it thus you wish to save Leonce? him, on whose account you have taken the fatal resolution which ruins you both for ever! Did you not confess to me, that love alone had prompted that idea? Well then, let love unbind the fatal knots which he has formed!"—"What," said Delphine in reply, "you believe it to be impossible to console Leonce, or sufficiently to fortify his soul, to enable him to sacrifice his life to glory and to virtue! be not concerned about my fate; I feel that the hand of death is upon me. I am sensible that nature will soon come to my assistance: if he but resigns himself to life, I then shall be able to die in peace." "No," answered I, "I will not conceal

it from you; nothing can prevail upon Leonce to support his present situation." "And he himself," replied Delphine, "would he consent to an alternative so opposite to his habitual notions, and to that opinion which he has always so profoundly revered?" "Great, real misfortunes," replied I, "make all those defects disappear, which grow out of nothing but the factitious combinations entered into by mankind. The amusement and the bustle of the world give rise to the sufferings of the imagination; but, on the approach of death, we are sensible of nothing but the voice of truth. Leonce, though prepared to die, will eagerly seize the salutary means that may snatch him from the gaping tomb; allow me only to hold forth that hope to him." "Leave me," said Delphine rather abruptly, "I am in need of a few hours to pause awhile on the most unexpected idea; an idea that suddenly agitates my spirits, and disturbs my mind. Before the close of day you shall

shall have my answer."—I left her. In the evening she sent me the letter she had received from Leonce, together with the answer she promised me; they both run as follow:

LEONCE TO DELPHINE.

"In the garden of thy prison, Delphine, not far from the spot where thou didst not refuse to grant a lugubrious retreat even to thine enemy, I am anxious to meet with thee. Be not alarmed; my situation requires some soft consolatory moments previous to my last.—I am not inclined to leave the world in the disposition in which I now find myself; thy voice must come to soothe and soften my agitated heart. Do not permit my soul to extricate itself amidst a ferment of rage: No, render it worthy of that Heaven towards which it is preparing to wing its way. Dear unfortunate! art thou willing to die with me? art thou? It would wear

 some-

something of a congenial feature to happiness, thus to quit the world together. I shall put into thy hand the dagger that must drink deep of my heart's blood: that heart thou will know from its strong and terrible palpitations. I shall guide thy hand and the fatal steel that arms it. Ere long and thou wilt follow me . . . . . No —no—remain still for a time; I wish it: but who could dare to require of me to survive that inexorable destiny that determines to separate us, while so many chances seemed emulously to conspire to unite us again for ever. I am left alone and desolate in that universe where I have no longer any thing around me which I was taught to hold dear.—Who at the present moment possesses the secret of my sorrows? Who is acquainted with my past life? For whom am I not a being utterly unknown? Am I to begin existence again, with a lacerated, bleeding heart? It is with reluctance I should have supported

supported life, even before I had tasted of suffering: what should I not be prepared to do now?

"Ah, Delphine! let us enjoy one day more, one last day to see one another, to commune with one another. Death, if thou wilt believe me, has much in it of sweetness. I will taste, I will drink of it to the bottom: that day I will hold instead of a long futurity—Yes, every sentiment of which mankind is susceptible, will then unite and be confounded together; and when the sun sets, nature, that has permitted me to taste of all the tenderest affections, will have fully acquitted all her obligations towards me!

"When I behold thee again, death shall be brooding within my breast. Towards the close of day, my eyes shall gradually and insensibly grow dim: but the last object I shall behold will be thy charms. Delphine, to-morrow shall I disclose to thee the whole of my mind. In a situation therefore, without an hereafter to look

for, or an hope to indulge, my soul shall transfuse itself wholly into thine. I shall taste the transports of the most unrestrained indulgence: the links of life shall previously be burst asunder, and all I shall then ask will be only one day, one last hour to be passed in thy presence. Fear nothing, Delphine, to-morrow will imprint a tender recollection on thy mind. Yes, hope for to-morrow; do not dread it. Let the death of thy lover, thus prepared, appear to thee what it really is to him, a happy moment, in spite of a cruel destiny! Adieu!"

DELPHINE TO M. DE LEBENSEI.

THERE, sir, is his letter: it completely confirms my resolution; write to him and explain your motives; whatever he determines upon, I will abide by. I should be happy to be able to consult with a friend of mine, Mad. de Cerlebe, who has been kept away from me these several days past by her father's indisposition; her understanding

derstanding is certainly not equal to yours, but she is a woman, and her opinion respecting the duties of her sex ought to be more scrupulously correct, but no matter: I will be guided by yours. I am not unconscious, however, of the misery to which I expose myself: it may very well happen that Leonce disapprove of my resolution, and that he may love me less for having adopted it.—Sooner than expose myself to that danger, I should willingly submit to the most excruciating pains: but the life of Leonce, and not my own, is at stake; and before that consideration, every thing else vanishes into nought. I have never been able to enjoy a moment's ease of mind since a man whom I did not love has perished for my sake: and am I to be deemed the cause of the death of the most amiable, the most generous of men! No, shame itself! yes, shame, that at least which is not accompanied with remorse, is much more easy to be endured than the driving to despair the object whom we love.

Before the tribunal of my heart I feel that I am acquitted of guilt; but every thing tells me that the world will pronounce me guilty, and that I run against opinion where its current is most violent. It will perhaps be enough for Leonce to know, that I have not rejected a design of that nature to make him cease to love me, and even then still let him know that I have not rejected it. If I become less dear to him, he may be able to live without me: my only wish is to rescue his life; and every sacrifice is possible while there is a chance of saving him. To-morrow he resolves to die; to-morrow will be extinguished within these arms that pure and heroic soul.—The last time I saw him, my cries, my tears were sufficient to revive him; and after a few days, he will again lay prostrate and motionless at my feet, as he did before. Yes!—but it will then be for ever! perhaps I degrade myself in his eyes; but whether he refuses or accepts my offer, he will live. The impression

he

he must feel from what you are going to propose to him, must disarm his fatal resolution. If I thus extinguish Leonce's love for me, I shall not hesitate to die; but then he will survive me—yes; and that is what I wish—write to him therefore; you have my consent.

"DELPHINE."

Immediately on receiving Delphine's letter, I dispatched the following one to Leonce:

M. DE LEBENSEI TO M. DE MONDOVILLE.

"Shall you have strength enough to listen to a salutary advice, an advice that calls for courage and energy, an advice that will rescue you from an abyss of misery, and raise both you and Delphine to the purest and most perfect destiny? Shall you have sufficient resolution to embrace a measure which offends, I muft own, what your whole life has been solicitous

to respect, decorum; but a measure perfectly compatible with morality, reason, and humanity?

"I was born a protestant—my education, I confess, has not taught me to revere those frantic and barbarous institutions which doom so many innocent creatures to stifle the voice of natural affections; and, in my judgment, the less to be relied on, because I hold it aloof from the influence of prejudice. The proud, high-minded, virtuous man ſhould obey no dictate but that of universal morality. What mean those duties which are modelled by circumstances which depend upon the caprice of the laws, or the will of priests; which bow down the conscience of man before the decision of other men, long since enslaved under the yoke of the same prejudices, but more particularly of the same intereſts? Most undoubtedly, morality is of sufficiently high importance to have induced the Supreme Being to impart to each of his creatures that

that portion of light which is requisite to comprehend and to practise what is moral —and can what is repugnant to the purest heart be ever erected into a duty? Attend to what I say—the laws of France absolve Delphine from the rash vows which fatal and imperious circumſtances imposed upon her. Come, live in that happy region, your native land, and uniting yourself in blissful bonds with her whom you love, be at once the happiest of men and the worthiest of being so. What! you are prepared to die sooner than renounce Delphine, and yet the idea I ſuggeſt has not presented itself to your mind! Is it a husband who deprives you of the woman whom you love? What true and real duty separates her from you? A vow made to God! ah! very imperfect indeed is our knowledge of the relations in which we stand with respect to the Supreme Being; but he is certainly too well acquainted with the frailty of man's nature ever to accept of irrevocable engagements.

 "On

"On the eve of the day on which Mad. d'Albemar pronounced her vows, was not her whole soul agitated by the most cruel uncertainties? These fatal vows were but the act of a moment, which was followed by the most bitter repentance—and must the fate of her whole life hang upon that moment of thoughtless passion, which hurried her along as by an external force over which she had no controul. Alas! as man advances from one period of his life to another, his character is often so materially changed, as to betray a greater difference from himself than is often to be found between two persons wholly strangers to each other. Shall then man, as influenced on one day, bind down man for the whole of life? What has not the imagination attempted to devise, in order to fix its own volatility? But of all its chimeras, eternal vows are truly the most frightful, and the most inconceivable. Moral nature revolts at the idea of this compleat slavery that would fetter futurity;

rity; it was left free and open to us, that we might see nothing but hope always before us; and nothing but guilt could irrevocably deprive us of it.

"When the fate of others is involved in our promises, then indeed duties of the most sacred stamp may consecrate their duration; but the All-powerful Being, who is likewise sovereignly good, does not require that his creature should irrevocably adhere to the imprudent vows he may have made to him. God, who speaks within the heart of man through the voice of nature, previously forbids his binding himself to any engagements that are contrary to every sentiment, as well as to every social virtue; and if a melancholy temerity has prompted human beings to relinquish, in a moment of despair, all the gifts and comforts of life, it is not the benefactor from whom they hold them who will resist their shrinking from that suicide: they may

 indulge

indulge in the luxury of doing good, and evincing their affections to others.

"It were, no doubt, needless to detain your attention any longer on the folly of religious vows: on this point you and I I most perfectly agree; but if misfortune has not greatly changed you, the dread of censure operates most powerfully upon your mind—for, when I attempted at Zurich to prepare you for the cruel event that threatened you, I saw you tremble to the inmost fibre, when I attempted to recommend to you a contempt for opinion, that contempt without which I foresaw you never could be restored to happiness. Perhaps, also, you may be averse from availing yourself of the French laws, which are the consequences of a revolution which you do not approve.

"But that revolution, my dear friend, the splendour of which has been unfortunately tarnished by a multitude of crimes, will

will be prized by posterity, on account of the liberty which it may ensure to France: if it be doomed to have no other result but that of exhibiting to the world different forms of ſlavery, then indeed it would be the most shameful period that can pollute the page of history. But if liberty is determined to spring up from it: glory, happiness, virtue, every thing that is noble in the nature of man is so intimately united with liberty, that succeeding ages have always made allowances for the events that ushered in its reign.

"But is it here necessary that I should enter into a discussion with you upon the laws of France? Let your own judgment weigh well the circumſtances which attended the vows made by Delphine, their precipitancy, the means employed by Mad. de Ternan to abridge the time of her noviciate: does there, or has there existed in any place or time whatever, a tribunal of equity that would not release Delphine from engagements so entered into?

into? No sentiment of delicacy, no scruple of conscience throws any obstacle in the way of the measure which I propose to you. There is then but one obſtacle, one danger to be dreaded, and that consists in the censure you fear from the generality of those of your own rank, with whom you are in the habits of associating.

"Have you well considered, my dear Leonce, the pain which that unjust censure will cause you, supposing it were true that it was impossible to appease it? Happy, the happiest of mortals in your domestic retirement! go, live in solitude, and renounce an intercourse with those whose opinion cannot accord with your own. You will soon forget men whom you no longer see, and you will withdraw from among them the influence of your consideration and of your example. It is vain to attempt to heal the imagination while the recurrence of the same objects continues to renew its morbid impressions; but

but it is soon quieted and calmed, when, for a length of time, nothing is suffered to intrude that can refresh the recollections that wound it. There is in the constitution of the generality of men a certain tincture of folly, a sort of susceptibility that exposes them to suffer, a kind of imbecillity which they will not confess, but which has more sway over them than the motives they profess; there is something in it of an insanity of the soul, which arises from certain circumstances peculiar to each individual. Every one should endeavour himself to treat it, as it would be treated by skilful physicians, in case it had deranged the organs of reason: it is necessary to avoid the objects which give rise to that insanity; to adopt a new mode of life, and a new round of occupations; to beguile the imagination, instead of attempting to subdue it: for it still continues to have influence upon our happiness, even when it is prevented from directing our conduct. I do not then come forward

forward with common-place topics of philosophy, to advise you to triumph over your anxiety respecting what you may apprehend from the opinion of others; but merely to recommend to you a mode of life that can shelter you from that anxiety.

"Your love for Delphine must make her company heighten in your mind the delights of solitude: do not admit to an intimate intercourse with you but some few friends who are exempt from prejudices, and have hearts to joy in your joys. You are determined to die, you say; but is not that immolating Delphine also? Your are well convinced that she cannot endure to survive you, and you would both deprive yourselves of the sweetest of conditions, of love in wedlock, merely because there are some men who would satirize your conduct. Recall to your mind any one of those men about whose opinion you are so exceedingly alarmed—is there one of them who deserves you should sacrifice him a day, an hour, of Delphine's

company?

company? and yet, for the sake of them all put together, you would condemn her to die—You may generalize very speciously indeed on the sentiments inspired by the fear of offending the opinion of mankind, but take a more detailed view of the object which you dread. A visit not paid to your wife: an invitation which she does not receive: a bow or curtsey that is refused her: would you not blush to put happiness and love in competition with these miserable formalities of politeness, which power is always sure to command, whatever may be the evil it produces, whenever it chooses to threaten to commit more?

Ah! if the dictates of your conscience coincided with what the world would say of you, not a man of them but would have it in his power to humble you; for your heart would not preserve within itself any strength to enable you to rise superior to their censure; but can it be for you, for you, Leonce, that love and virtue,

that

that the affections of the heart and tranquillity of conscience would not be sufficient to support and bear up under the weight of life! Were you to find yourself suddenly transported to the banks of the Oroonoko with Delphine, you would still be happy, supremely happy—and, consider, have you not in addition all the pleasures and enjoyments which fortune and the arts of civilization can bestow! Is it possible that beings who feel no sort of attachment for you, beings, who would spend a quarter of an hour of the day in censuring you, but who would not employ the same space of time to render you any one important service?—Is it possible, I say, that such persons should be suffered to stand between you and Delphine, and prevent you from being united together? Much would these formidable censurers be surprized, did they but know the sacrifices you are prepared to make to them: what would be their triumph thus to have wounded, with their feeble weapons, a

character

character whose armour they themselves imagined was impervious to their darts?

"You would then command your own and the blood of Delphine to flow, not for love, not for remorse, but on account of the frivolous chattering of this or that society, this or that circle of women, amongst whom you would not stoop to choose a mistress, but to whom you think it your duty to sacrifice the woman whom heaven had given to you on a day of its most bountiful munificence!

"Leonce, I have reduced your despair to its only cause: henceforward there can be no other; I have degraded, even in your own mind, your own grief; drive off those phantoms that would still endeavour to intimidate you; look up to heaven, listen once more to nature, cast your eyes for a time upon those mountains that surround us, contemplate the land from their lofty summits, and tell me if you be not sensible that all the little low anxieties of the world remain immersed on a

level

level with the fog of cities, and can never aspire to a higher sphere. Believe me, Leonce, too close an intercourse with men dims the light of the understanding, unbraces the springs of energy and elevation: nor will those fires of heaven, genius, love, morality, kindle up and blaze but in solitude. Leonce, you may find happiness in retirement; you cannot fail of finding it with Delphine. You are both in the bloom of youth, of love, and of virtue, and you are meditating the means of annihilating in death all those prime comforts of life. Amidst the smiling days of summer, and under the soft serenity of heaven, Nature calls you to her; but the malignity of men would shut your ears to the genial call. The intention of the Creator manifests itself but obscurely in all these combinations of society, which the conflict of passions and interests have so variously complicated; but if you look for the sublime end of a beneficent God, you will discover it in your own heart, you will

trace

trace it in the amenities of the country, you will adore it at the feet of Delphine. My dear friend, I have surely said enough: your heart must feel indignant at my over ardent perseverance.

"Delphine is acquainted with the advice I give you: Delphine approves of it—it may perhaps belong to women to tremble before the tribunal of public opinion: but it behoves men, and more particularly Leonce, either to direct it, or to shake off its yoke."

This letter was conveyed to M. de Mondoville; he shut himself up for three hours after the moment of its reception, and then returned his answer to my servant, with a calm and serious air. He did not desire to see me, and forbid his servants to enter his apartments the remainder of the evening. You have his answer now before you.

M. DE MONDOVILLE TO M. DE LEBENSEI.

"Delphine has given her assent to your proposal, and I willingly accept it. She alters my destiny, by altering her own: we shall live, and we shall live together: what an unexpected blessing! To-morrow was doomed to be the last day of my life, and it shall be the commencement of a new period of existence. Delphine then may still be happy! Farewel, my dear friend, I am indebted to you for my life; I am indebted to you still more, since you imagine that Delphine would not have survived me. Continue to complete the necessary arrangements for our departure, and our future establishment, for I feel myself incapable of attending to any thing after such violent emotions.

LEONCE DE MONDOVILLE.

For the first moments after receiving this letter, I was perfectly satisfied with its

its contents, and I carried it to Delphine with every sentiment and expression of joy; she read it over hastily for the first time, and then a second time rather slowly; and after returning it to me, she said: —" The resolution which Leonce has taken must have cost him a painful struggle; examine his first sentiment, that is, the assent which he gives to our proposal; and farther on he says, that he hopes I shall be happy. Does he mention a single word about himself? and does not his requesting you to take on yourself all the necessary arrangements, convince you that they must be odious to him? There are many other slight suggestions of his sentiments: but he will still live, the impression has been made; he will live. My dear friend," continued she, "I beg of you to make no final arragements; I wish to assume to myself alone the ultimate decision of my destiny. I shall obtain permission from Mad. de Ternan, who is persecuted by my grief, and the resentment of Leonce,

Leonce, to go to the waters of Bade, in the neighbourhood of Zurich, for a few weeks. The state of my health justifies this request, and the favour will not be refused to me. I shall pass those days with Leonce, and we shall converse without restraint together during that time, and whatever may be the consequence, I shall, at least, compel him to renounce the fatal project which threatened his existence."

You now see, Mademoiselle, the actual situation of the two persons in the world who have the best title to be happy. I hope, that during Mad. d'Albemar's stay at Bade, her own uneasiness and the troubles of Leonce will totally disappear; I have afforded them every relief that love can receive from friendship, but their destiny, at present, depends upon themselves alone.

LETTER

LETTER XIII.

DELPHINE TO MADEMOISELLE D'ALBEMAR.

Bade, Aug. 18, 1792.

YOU have received, my dear sister, every information from M. de Lebensei, that concerns me; the recent intelligence from France has compelled him to leave us, and his anxiety for his wife did not allow him a moment of repose. This morning, on my arrival at Bade, he came to see me with Leonce, in order to take his leave of me before his departure. As I had not seen Leonce since the proposals of M. de Lebensei had been made, I thought it requisite to forbid him returning to my convent, and his resignation to this order astonished me. His emotion on our meeting again this morning impressed me considerably, and I could see, at least, that I had not lost my empire over his heart. We did not converse together alone,

alone, a circumstance which I dreaded, and he did not appear to seek an opportunity to do so; we were entirely occupied with the departure of M. de Lebensei, and the natural topic that occurred was the subject of that departure; but why did not Leonce oblige me to converse upon another subject?

My dear Louisa, the hope of being Leonce's wife, by breaking all my vows, at first inspired me with terror only, but now it takes possession of my whole soul, attended with all its seductive illusions. Do not persuade yourself, however, that if I should discover in Leonce any reluctance or regret, I shall not be able to break through this last tie of life, which the friendship of M. de Lebensei has suddenly contrived to renew for my sake.—No, Leonce, if my heart be dissatisfied with thine, I shall not accuse thee of thy coldness; I shall pardon thee, and I shall know how to dismiss thee back to the world and its glories: and when the loss of me shall

be no more than a faint regret that will not make life uneasy to thee, then shall I be at liberty to die.

It is a long time, my dear Louisa, since I received any letters from you; are you ill; or rather do you feel reluctant to speak to me about my own situation? You act right; I should shudder at the idea of hearing your opinion, when it no longer accords with my own inclination. I am now in one of those critical periods of life, in which our judgments must be directed by events alone. I require no advice, I find myself attracted by a sentiment so irresistible, that nothing repugnant to it can command any influence over my heart. I do not believe—no, I do not believe that I shall adopt that fortunate and terrible resolution which would set me at perfect liberty; but it is not on account of any motives of common and reasonable suggestion, that I should hesitate or linger about that step. I am proud

of my passion for Leonce; it is my glory and my destiny, and every thing that appertains to it honours me in my own eyes. Since my love no longer disturbs the happiness of any individual, I surrender myself to it, as pious souls devote themselves to the object of their adoration. I exist only through Leonce; if he loves me, if he chooses me for his partner, in whose presence shall I blush? who shall not be beneath me in my own opinion? But, what are his sentiments, or what are his feelings on this occasion? Can you divine them, my dear sister? Can you acquaint me with them? Ah! I conjure you, communicate with me on this subject alone.

LETTER XIV.

DELPHINE TO MADEMOISELLE D'ALBEMAR.

Bade, Aug. 20.

No—he does not deliver himself up without sorrow and repentance to the contemplation of our future fate! We found ourselves alone yesterday evening, for the first time for near a year, and after the many dreadful incidents that befel us both. On our entrance he sought with his eyes for M. de Lebensei, whose departure he was unacquainted with; formerly, in my presence, he seemed forgetful of every other person: he then drew near to me, and addressed me thus:—"My dear Delphine, I have lost my revered mother, my son, and my whole family." He then paused, and shortly after continued thus: "I am now on the point of being united to thee; I shall be, still, but too happy." I pressed his hand without uttering a word;

word; I must, alas! I must continue to observe and watch him. Happy was the time, when I read in my own heart, every sentiment that was conceived in his!

A profound silence ensued after the last words of Leonce, and then he threw his arms around me, and said: "Thou art present, my dear Delphine, it is thyself I embrace; thou hast quitted the habit that resembled the robes of death. Ah! how feelingly do not I thank thee for that happy resolution!" "Yes," said I, "I have quitted it for a time." "For ever!" replied he; "it was for my sake you pronounced the fatal vows; it is my duty to violate them, and to render you back that existence which you have sacrificed for me; it is my duty——" He then stopped short, as if he had perceived that the constant repetition of the word *duty* was offensive to my feelings. "Alas!" cried he, "I have suffered so much lately, that I am still dejected, as if misfortune were

were not as yet at an end." "We shall converse together," replied I, "on every topic that interests us both, on our future prospects."—"On what shall we converse," interrupted he precipitately, "is not every thing decided, and nothing more to be said on that subject?" "Nothing more to be said!" cried I. "Alas! Leonce, is it thus—" He would not permit me to finish the inconsiderate reproach which I was on the point of pronouncing; he threw himself at my feet, and expressed his love for me with so much ardour, that I lost by degrees, in listening to him, every symptom of uneasiness: and, when he perceived me recovering from my alarm, he continued silent, and relapsed into his reveries. He was desirous that I ſhould be happy, and when he imagined I was really so, he felt no longer any desire to speak to me.

I am determined that he shall explain himself, and I shall force him to a decla-

ration of his sentiments. What! shall I accept his hand, if he imagines that he makes a sacrifice by offering it to me? His character has already disunited us; if it must separate us once more, let it be without any further hopes of recovery! If my last hope is deceived, all is lost, even to the final charm of regret and sorrow. In what gloomy asylum shall I bury the sensations that I must experience? Will not death be sufficient to obliterate the slightest trace of memory and recollection? Alas! my dear sister, is not my imagination deranged, and disordered? No—I hope not as yet; no, do not ever believe it to be so.

LETTER

LETTER XV.

DELPHINE TO MADEMOISELLE D'ALBEMAR.

Bade, Aug. 24th.

THIS day Leonce and I went out to take an excursion on the mountains, and in the woods that encircle Bade; it was eight in the morning, and the weather was never so beautiful. "Ah!" cried Leonce, when we were at some distance from the town, "how sweet is the contemplation of nature, how delightful the oblivion of mankind! Let us bury ourselves in the woods, that I may no longer see the habitations of men! Let only you and me exist, in our imaginations, in the universe; in such a supposition how happy might we not be!" "What injury," replied I, "do other beings who live and die like us, inflict on you? They love, perhaps, as we do, suffer much as if they loved, and deserve our compassion, though

even we may have the best claim on theirs." "What injury," replied Leonce with violence, "they pass judgment on our actions! but that is nothing; let us forget them!" He then advanced with hasty steps towards the forest, where he conducted me. I turned pale, my strength began to fail me; such have been my sufferings for a long time, that, perhaps, nature will at last deliver me from the perplexities of my situation. Leonce perceived the alteration of my features; he was afflicted with the most poignant sorrow at the sight, he conjured me to sit down, and lavished on me the tenderest promises and expressions. He began to perceive that by attempting to quiet my alarms about his secret thoughts, he revealed them to me, and permitted me to have an insight into those sentiments which he had not as yet expressed to me.

In my replies to him, I let nothing escape from me that could make him sensible of the discovery that I had made; but

but I returned with a resolution to question him in a solemn manner, the following day, and to disengage him from every promise he has made in my behalf. But, in what state will he find himself when I reveal the sentiments of his own heart to him? What will be my own situation? In vain do I seek for some resource, I am destitute of all; an idea occurs to me, I seize it with avidity, and my next reflexion proves its impossibility.

When every hope is lost, when every situation is surrendered, not to say of happiness, but even of tolerable ease and comfort, will not life then cease spontaneously without my efforts? But, alas! nature scatters misery with an unsparing hand, and seems mysteriously to stop before the last calamity of all, before that which, depriving us of power to suffer, delivers us from the troubles of existence.

I thought my sufferings to have been supportable before, but I had not yet experienced the punishment of constraint in the

the presence of the person I loved; a species of uneasiness which you would feel, had there been a third person in the apartment to prevent the freedom of conversation with a lover. When Leonce was absent, my regret recalled him to my memory; he is now before me, and my happiness is incomplete; he loves me, I am sensible, as much as ever, and still we do not understand each other; our souls mutually repel the tender sympathies of reciprocal affection, and never did the sense of duty which separated us, nor even the supposed injuries and errors laid to my charge, place such an unsurmountable barrier between us! I know that the demand of an explanation would stagger him; we both shudder at that idea, because we know well that it involves the question of our lives.

I shall demand it of Leonce, however, at some favourable moment, and every word he then shall utter—yes, every word shall be irrevocable! It is my wish to pe-

netrate

netrate into the recesses of his heart; his most secret sentiments will revive in all their force, after a temporary suspension of their power, arising from the emotions of love.

To-morrow, therefore—No, not altogether so soon: I wish to have a respite of a few days, in order to recover my spirits; but, to-morrow I shall know all. No—a further pause is necessary. Let me preserve those vague and fluctuating impressions which suspend me on the precipice, and do not irrecoverably impel me to my fall. Do not refuse me your compassion, my dear Louisa; I claim it by the strongest privileges of misfortune.

LETTER XVI.

DELPHINE TO MADEMOISELLE D'ALBEMAR.

Aug. 30th.

MY fate is not as yet decided, but the irrevocable moment draws near. Yesterday Leonce turned the conversation upon the political events of France; the indignation with which they filled him, and the inclination which he had felt of joining the standard of the Emigrants, and carrying on the war in concert with the French nobility: there even escaped from him certain expressions, which sufficiently indicated that he was still animated by the same spirit. For my part, I stood amazed and confounded. It was the first time that he ever spoke of himself without including me: it was the first time that he expressed to me a sentiment, or communicated a design, without closely connecting it, or endeavouring to connect it, with

with love! A chilling cold touched my heart, like the hand of death: it seemed to me as if the shade of night had shrowded the face of the earth—I was left without the power of uttering a single word.

Leonce would fain continue, and made a great effort, as he rose, to utter these words:—" And why should I not obey the dictates of honour?" I then imagined that he had said all he had to say; and my countenance expressed, no doubt, the despair with which I was seized; for Leonce, on looking at me, exclaimed, " Barbarous and inhuman that I am!"—and then fell at my feet in a swoon.

Good Heavens! what were my feelings on beholding him in that deplorable situation? The most impassioned emotions of love resumed their sway over my soul: I endeavoured to recal Leonce to life; and, as soon as he was able to hear me, I expressed my readiness to make every sacrifice, and even to pardon his utterance of the very sentiments which occasioned

casioned our separation. But at every attempt I made to enter into an explanation, he interrupted, saying, "In the name of heaven, I beseech you to stop: my sufferings are intolerable—Would you precipitate my death?" The sudden change on his countenance made me apprehensive that he would again relapse into the state from which he had just emerged.

"It is at my heart," said he, "that I feel the most acutely excruciating pain:" and saying so, he laid his hand upon it, as if vainly endeavouring to mitigate its unutterable anguish. I suffered, meantime, an emotion, a perturbation, which surpassed any thing I had ever endured. I dreaded the harm I might do him by speaking, yet I felt earnestly desirous to set him at liberty, and to relieve him from a struggle that wounded his heart, though the pain it would give him most deeply distressed myself. I saw every explanation was impossible: he avoided, he repelled every thing, and left me scarcely able

able to support his tottering steps, yet unwilling to remain, or to break a silence, in which he seemed determined to persist.

Ah! shall I still endeavour to conceal from myself the sentiments that prey upon him? Dear sister, why did it happen that I listened to the voice of hope? Should I not well have known that it was my lot never to escape from misfortune?

LETTER XVII.

DELPHINE TO MADEMOISELLE D'ALBEMAR.

Sept. 8th, 1792.

CHANCE has brought about every thing: I am informed of all. My resolution is taken; and I sincerely hope it will cost me my life! Since the last scene that had passed between Leonce and me, we continued as if under the influence of a secret dread, and as it were by mutual consent, not to touch upon our future projects;

jects; and, from hearing our conversations, one would be led to imagine that we had no resolve to take, no plan to form, but merely to lose ourselves in the reveries of a pleasing melancholy.

We had thus passed away the morning, both of us in a pensive mood, both dreading an end of those days, when holding each other's hand we still continued to walk together leaning on each other. I observed, that as Leonce reconducted me home, he always took a roundabout way, in order to avoid passing through the town. I expected he would have done the same this morning, when we perceived several persons hastening to the post-office, because, said they, news of a very calamitous nature was received from France. Both Leonce and I felt an inclination, which we did not reflect on, to follow them; but when got among the crowd that surrounded the house, I heard a number of voices that muttered around me—" *Do you see that nun who fled from her convent*

in

in order to marry this young man?"—A number of women, with sour, repulsive countenances, began to observe, "*These are the fine principles that instigate the assassinations in France! How can such scandalous conduct be tolerated here!*" Upon this Leoncè made a menacing gesture, but I stopped him—"What would you do?" said I. "Dread above all things the noising abroad of our story—that would be still more fatal—let us withdraw." He obeyed; but I observed large drops of sweat pour down his face during the remainder of the way, and paleness and redness alternately overspread his face.

When we had reached my apartments, he flung himself on a couch, and, forgetful of my presence, began to speak to himself in this manner:—"No, life is insupportable without honour! and honour is distributed by the judgments and sentiments of mankind; I must escape from their condemnation in the tomb." These words, the violence of his gestures in delivering them,

them, and what I had a moment before listened to in the midst of the crowd; every circumstance, in short, tended to open my eyes upon the fault which I had committed! I beheld the truth, as if it were the first dawn of reason breaking on my soul; and, even now, I cannot possibly conceive how M. de Mondoville could prevail on himself to encounter the general censure that must have attended us, if we had followed the counsels of M. de Lebensei.

"Leonce," said I, "to-morrow I return to my convent; I renounce for ever the delusive hope that filled my soul—to-morrow, I for ever leave thee; adieu."——"Adieu," repeated he. "Just heavens! what have I said?" He started up in a transport, and instantly after sunk back into all the violence of grief: I approached him, and, with more confidence and courage than I flattered myself with possessing, I addressed him thus: "Leonce, reproach not thyself—we have cruelly abused

each

each other---a character as delicately sensible as thy own, not only shudders at the idea of our union, but such an idea would have condemned to misery any man whom habit and reflection had not emancipated from the slavish subjection of worldly censure; it will draw the malignant observations of mankind upon thy conduct—renounce it for ever."-—-" Unhappy man that I am!" cried he; " I confess, that this day I have suffered the bitterest pangs. Could shame have possibly reached me? Could shame be my attendant with thee? Shall I, when on the point of possessing thee, resign thee for ever? Must my rigid temper and resolutions separate us for the second time? Had you never consented to follow my destiny, had you considered it impossible, I should have died with a pleasing impression, I should have died without detesting myself; but now, when you devote yourself to me, when I may be your husband, this infernal power, which is denominated the opinion of mankind, rushes

rushes between us to disunite us for ever! Execrable phantom!" exclaimed he, in a phrenzy of despair, "what is thy design in exhibiting me incessantly under the blackest colours of contempt?—Contempt! —Who has dared to pronounce that word? Who would venture to testify contempt for me, for her? Shall I not plunge a poniard into the breast of him who shall dare to threaten us with insult? But still from their blood will arise the monster to attack us again; the monster of opinion who cannot be enchained or enslaved. O heavens! let me tear this heart which will not make a total sacrifice to love, nor immolate love itself upon the altar of honour. I ardently thirst for death; O God! thou who hast created me for so much misery, destroy the work of thy hands; I invoke thee, I offend thee, annihilate me on the spot!" "Stop," cried I, "stop thy impious expostulations; that God, whom thou disregardest, will do better for us both. I now feel the icy hand of death."

At

At that moment I actually felt the symptoms of approaching dissolution, without apprehension or dismay. "Thou diest," replied Leonce, "when thou mightest live for me, and mightest become my wife! come to the altar, come this very instant, where I shall possess thee; I shall be intoxicated with my bliss. Follow me, let us decide this moment on our future lives. Let us form this resolution in a transport of enthusiasm, and leave no pause for bitter recollections to revive! Let us surrender to the love that inspires us, let not the cold and callous dictates of reason overtake us. I conjure thee, linger not, retard me no more. . . . "—"O wild, and inconsiderate man," interrupted I, "what happiness can I henceforth ever feel with you? Had I discovered but a single sentiment of sorrow in your heart, it would have contributed to poison all the comfort of my life; and I should forget without reluctance the cruel struggles which I witness! I should forget them for ever!" said I with vehe

vehemence, "and I now make, in thy presence, a vow more sacred and binding than all those which I wished to violate for thy sake! It is the unrestrained effusion of my heart, and dictated by the calm and considerate whispers of my reason. May Heavens then blast me before thy eyes, if ever I shall become thy wife!" "Well!" cried Leonce, "may I lose thy love, and even thy compassion, if I survive that imprecation!"

He then made an attempt to go out, but being alarmed at his intention, I threw myself on my knees, and conjured him to stay: he was moved by my supplications, the deadly paleness of my countenance affected him, and he took me in his arms, saying in a softer accent:—"Why should you regret my loss, my dear Delphine? are you not sensible that our mutual confidence has faded, that I have offended you, and that I ought to be the object of your aversion? I detest my own weakness, and I cannot divest myself of its influence; every

every thing is contradictory, every thing is wretchedness in the extreme in my existence! Do not hinder me to die! The eternal fever that preys upon me will cease, when my strength begins to fail; I have still too much life, and mankind, yes, mankind well know how to irritate the agonies of affliction! How can I be avenged for the sufferings they inflict? How can I calm the emotions of the rage which they excite?" At this moment, a regiment of soldiers passed under my windows, and their band was playing some very fine military airs: Leonce listened, and raised his head with a dignified aspect of enthusiasm, so striking and sublime, that forgetful of my sorrows, once more I fixed my eyes on his countenance, and drank intoxicating draughts of love from his eyes. He guessed my sensations, and reclining his head upon my hands, I felt them bedewed by his tears. The music then ceased, and Leonce recovering his tranquillity, said to me:—" My soul is

now more calm; a salutary succour has descended on me from on high, sent by the celestial intelligence that watches over thy existence: farewel, my beloved friend; farewel—I have need of repose." "To-morrow—to-morrow," repeated I; "yes," replied he, "to-morrow; farewel?" He then quitted me without any further reply.

He would by no means acquaint me with the sentiments that possessed him while he was listening to the music. Might it have revived his intentions of engaging in the war? Good Heavens! what a cruel situation have not my misfortunes and my errors plunged me into! To-morrow I will inform Leonce of my intention to return to my convent, and to shut myself up for ever: to-morrow he will know that I forgive him, and that I conjure him to forget me, yes, to-morrow...... Ah! what is to happen?....

LETTER

LETTER XVIII.

LEONCE TO DELPHINE.

Sept. 8, 1792.

IN returning home I heard of those dreadful massacres which have deluged Paris with blood. Misery and guilt present themselves every where; who can flatter himself with the hopes of being happy in such alarming times.

Do you not perceive something gloomy in the air? Some awful signs, the forerunners of calamitous events. No—I shall never again behold you! Listen to me—what am I going to say to you?—I part from you, well you know it! Do you not understand the rest?

Our situation was horrible, I blush at my weakness without being able to overcome it. All our connexions seemed to be destroyed—I repelled you, you whom I adore; I refused that happiness, without which

which I cannot live. Grief had nearly reduced me to the situation of a contemptible madman, when, yesterday, on hearing warlike music, which brought to my recollection the idea of battles, I felt myself reanimated. I have since heard most dreadful news, and that has been sufficient to fix my decision. In battle I shall be necessarily exposed to hazards, and I can, when I please, direct them to my head. No—it is only in the midst of war that I can sustain* the misery of being absent from you. It is there that death, always easy, always present, enables you to sustain the last few days of life consecrated to glory. There I shall feel sensations which will assuage despair itself: the blood which one must shed, the danger which threatens you, the horror which surrounds you, and all those exclamations of hatred which suspend for a time the pains of love; I shall be well when the sword is raised over me, I shall be better when it is plunged into my heart. Oh! my friend,

do

do not suppose that my affection for you is weakened in this contest between my character and my love; I can only reconcile them by the sacrifice of my life, that is, not to love you less. But, ought I to unite myself to you, without conferring honour upon you, and without sheltering you from the cruel malignity of public censure? Must one experience, in the midst of the most supreme happiness, feelings of misery? blush at one's self, because one cannot overcome those feelings? blush at having those feelings detected by others? love with idolatry, and not be happy with the object of one's affection? esteem you, adore you equal to angels, and yet see your character wither alway in the public opinion? conceal in the bottom of one's heart a grief which ought to be concealed from you? Such an existence would be odious; of all punishments is it not the most dreadful to find in one's own heart a sentiment which separates us from the object of our affection; to find in one's self

an obstacle when all others have disappeared? Unhappy man! I should suffer even at the moment that I clasped in my arms the woman that I adore, and while the flame of love ran through my veins—and yet, having had it in my power to become your husband, how could I endure existence, when I reflected that I had rejected such a blessing? How can I again undergo that misery which I have already experienced, and yet say to myself every moment—if I choose it, she is mine; yet I separate myself from her, and leave her to languish in that deplorable solitude into which my affection has plunged her. No, no, my Delphine, when those contradictory feelings, when those contending miseries have taken possession of a wretch, he must die, for he can neither decide nor remain in doubt, nor can he live after having fixed his choice.

And you, my friend, what wretchedness do I not make you experience? what a reward for your tenderness! But has

not

not the trouble, which I have been unable to conceal, in some degree weakened your affection for me? Have you not told me that you would never forget the fatal moment, that moment of doubt which destroyed the enchanting prospects of our future lives. Alas! I have shewn myself so unworthy of your love, that perhaps that recollection will console you for my loss.

Oh, my Delphine, believe me nevertheless when I tell you, that I have loved you passionately. No, never, never will you forget that friend, full of faults, of pride and of vehemence; but that friend, who, from the first hour he saw you, felt that you alone in the universe filled his whole soul, and that his fate rested upon you alone. It is done, my will separates us---Can I have an enemy more cruel than myself---Can I even make you comprehend how it is that I quit you, and that I adore you, that I seek for death at the moment when my long wished-for happi-

ness is offered to me, and that my passion for you is at the greatest height, at the time when that passion cannot triumph over my character?

Oh! thou, so gentle, so tender, thou who hast always been able to read my heart, see at the boatom of that heart the torments which agonize it, see that which I cannot speak, and which I cannot endure; and however culpable I may be, still pity thy unhappy friend.

I wish not to excite in you too painful regret. Live, angel of peace, to shed over the unhappy the gentle influence of your bounty! Live, that my last thoughts may turn to you, and that my name, falling some day under your eyes among the list of the dead, may call forth some tears, some recollection of the happy days when you loved me, and when I thought myself worthy of you. Oh, if those days could begin again—No, I cannot wish it! Regret would profane thy worship, and the happiness . . . . . Adieu . . . . . One prayer more,

more, if you will pardon me—Oh! best of women! when I shall be no more, find out where my tomb is situated—come to the spot where my heart shall be buried—I shall feel you near me, and I shall feel a thrilling sensation even in the arms of death.

LETTER XIX*.

DEDPHINE TO LEONCE.

YOU leave me—you part from me—I will follow you. But, barbarian, you have concealed from me the road you have taken, I know not where to seek you upon the surface of this earth. Was there ever such cruelty? No, he is not cruel! unhappy man! he is going to die!

* This letter was written on the 9th of September, after the departure of Leonce, and did not reach him.

I will find you out—I will tell you—— But alone, where can I go to? how dreadfully am I isolated! Oh, my God, my God! afford me succour and support. Somebody desires to see me—Who can wish to see me? It is not him. Who then? Oh! Divine Providence, have you listened to my prayers? It is a friend, it is M. de Serbellane.

LETTER XX.

DELPHINE TO MADEMOISELLE D'ALBEMAR.

OF all mankind, the best, the most compassionate is M. de Serbellane. If I die, I hope all my friends will testify to him the sincerest gratitude. He has met Leonce, and knows whether or not he is gone to seek death. That generous friend could not bring Leonce back; but he will conduct me to him. He thinks that if I see him I shall appease his despair.

M. de

M. de Serbellane, that man, the perfection of whose reason all the world boasts, has taken compassion upon the errors of my heart. He does not condemn the counsels of despair; he knows how to give succour as he wishes to receive succour himself. Ah! I bless him; it is he who will be my tutelary angel, it is he who will restore me to happiness—Happiness! Alas, what word have I dared to make use of—why should I efface it—Louisa, I swear that you shall only hear of my happiness—on earth, or in heaven, you shall know me to be happy.

CONCLUSION.

WE are not in possession of any more letters to enable us to continue this history. But M. de Serbellane, and some other friends of Mad. d'Albemar, have transmitted to us the following details:

M. de Serbellane, alarmed at the state in which he saw M. de Mondoville, did not resist the anxiety and the desire of Madame d'Albemar, but conducted her after Leonce across Germany. Always following M. de Mondoville without being able to overtake him, they reached Verdun, where the army which had entered France was assembled. The journey was extremely fatiguing, but the firmness and the goodness of M. de Serbellane, alternately repressed and assuaged the wretchedness of Mad. d'Albemar.

When

When she entered the town of Verdun she trembled, and her impatience seemed to be suspended the moment she was in a situation to know every thing. She begged of M. de Serbellane to endeavour to obtain some information about M. de Mondoville, and alighted at an inn in order to wait his return. While she was there, a young wounded Frenchman was brought into a room adjoining to hers. She enquired his name, and was told that it was Charles de Ternan. She had never seen him; but she knew that he was a relation of M. de Mondoville, and thinking that he might have heard of him, she went into his chamber without further reflection. She had, however, scarcely entered the door when she paused, and heard M. de Ternan say---" No, they should not occupy themselves about me, but about my brave companion, my generous friend---can nobody be sent to the French camp to demand him?---he did not serve in the foreign army---he had only just

just arrived at Verdun---we were walking together, and had strayed too far from the limits of the camp, when we were attacked by a republican patrole. I was wounded on the first fire, and my friend, knowing that if I was taken I was lost, only took up arms to defend me; I arrived too late to his assistance---he was taken, and conducted to Chaumont to be tried and shot! Just heaven! if you knew what a contempt of life, what a heroism of friendship he shewed!" Delphine hearing these words had no longer any doubt of her misfortune. She was covered with a long veil which concealed the striking beauty of her face and person. She advanced into the chamber, and stretching out her arms to M. de Ternan, exclaimed, "That generous, intrepid, unfortunate man, is M. de Mondoville!" "Yes," replied M. de Ternan, turning his head, "who has guessd it?" "Me," replied Delphine, and fainted. Every body ran to her assistance; they took up her veil,

veil, her hair fell upon her face as if it were still to hide it.

M. de Serbellane at that moment entered the room, and saw her surrounded by men, who seemed to think they saw something supernatural in the apparition of an unknown female, so beautiful and so interesting. He had been informed of the events which Delphine had first discovered. When she recovered, seizing the hand of M. de Serbellane with a convulsive grasp, she said to him, "You will come with me, we will go to his aid, your country is not at war with France, they will listen to you; I will implore them---is there not a degree of misery to which men cannot refuse compassion?---let us set out!" M. de Serbellane did not hesitate; he had already formed the design of going to Chaumont, and had brought with him the necessary passports for that purpose. He saw it would be vain to attempt to persuade Delphine not to accompany him, he therefore did not attempt it. His

character

character was as calm as that of Delphine was passionate; but when the great affections of the soul are interested, all generous beings muſt adopt the same conduct.

They set out together, and arrived at Chaumont in about ten hours. A short time before they arrived there, Delphine recollecting that M. de Serbellane had formerly told her of a gentle, but rapid poison which was known in Italy, and which would in a short time put an end to life; recalled to the recollection of M. de. Serbellane, the poison about which they had formerly conversed. "It is in this ring," said M. de Serbellane, shewing it, "where I have always carried it since I hade lost Theresa; and I have felt myself more calm and free in thinking, that if my life became insupportable, I had about me the means of terminating it."

Delphine, whatever might be her secret intention, and the vague but terrible idea that occupied her mind, assigned as a motive

tive to M. de Serbellane, in asking him for the ring, the desire which Leonce, proud and irritable as he was, would feel to escape punishment, at a time when the people would indulge themselves in insults against a man who would be pointed out to them as their enemy.

"I believe what you say to me," replied M. de Serbellane, "if you wish to die you would not conceal your intention to me; we will hereafter converse together upon this subject, with the courage which becomes a mind such as yours, and I hope I shall be able to dissuade you from your intention. I will tell you what I have undergone, and though our lives may promise nothing to us but misery, yet the idea that they may be made serviceable to others, ought to induce us to support them. Mad. d'Albemar replied, with sombre melancholy, "that her design was to give it to Leonce if he was condemned." M. de Serbellane then drew the ring from his finger, and gave it to Delphine.

"Here,"

"Here," exclaimed she, "is that which will unite us. This is the nuptial ring which I am destined to present to you! Oh! my God give me strength until the last moment. When they arrived at Chaumont, M. de Serbellane went and demanded permission to see M. Mondoville.---Mad. d'Albemar, while she was waiting for him, sat upon a bench opposite the prison in which she understood M. de Mondoville was confined. The beauty of Delphine, and the grief which was depicted on her countenance, drew the attention of several women, children, and old men, who had surrounded her, without her having perceived it. But the moment she rose to accompany M. de Serbellane, who had brought her permission to go into the prison, the poor people exclaimed, "You are in distress, my good lady, we offer up our prayers to God for you." "I thank you," replied she, "pray for a friend whom I have in this world, and whom they are going to destroy. There

are

are among you, perhaps, some more innocent than I am. God will hear them favourably—Pray to him, then, for mercy to me, and if there is a being upon earth whom you love, may that being recompence you for the good you will have done to me."

Her language deeply afflicted those to whom it was addressed, but they had not the power to serve her—M. de Serbellane told Delphine that she might immediately see Leonce, and that there would remain time enough for her to have an interview with the President of the tribunal, before it met to decide upon Leonce's fate. It so was arranged, that while Delphine remained in the prison, M. de Serbellane was to endeavour to see some persons in the city, who might have some influence with the tribunal. He was then to return for Delphine, after she had seen M. de Mondoville, and had been made acquainted with all the circumstances that tended to justify him.

The

The permission being shewn to the goaler, he opened the door of the prison, and Delphine, on entering this place of misery, saw her lover, who was writing with great calmness; the noise of opening the door made him raise his head, he immediately threw himself upon his knees before her, and exclaimed, "Just Heaven! what miracle is this? Is it merely the effect of imagination—I invoked her and she is here; all her features, all her beauties are before my eyes. Delphine, Delphine, is it you?" He clasped her in his arms, and lost for a moment the recollection of his situation—But the heart of Delphine was not relieved, and the transports of her lover did not afford her even a moment of illusion. "Delphine," said he, opening his bosom, "do you see this locket which contains your hair? I only fought for that, they could not take it from me—If you had not come to me, to that alone I should have given my last adieu! Ah, Delphine, why did I quit you?" "It is I who am guilty

guilty of your fate," replied she, "if I had not quitted my convent; If—but why add this recollection to my miseries which were before insupportable. Tell me only what I can say to your judges? I do not know whether I ought to hope, but I will speak to them." "You will obtain nothing, my friend," replied Leonce, "nevertheless, I could now consent to live, I now see things in a very differant point of view. In the midst of the misfortunes which I have experienced, and of the dangers which threaten me, I feel myself humbled for having attached so much importance to the judgment of men. The presence of death shews to us whatever is real in life. I do deny that I regret having sacrificed that life which you protected. I have known the value of the tranquil and happy life I should have led with you—If it was not now too late, nothing more should cloud our happiness. See, then, Delphine, if you can save me--I accept it." "Oh, my God!" exclaimed

exclaimed Delphine, and her sobs interrupted her voice.

"I do not know," continued Leonce, "what can be said in my defence. It seems, however, that in the opinion of those who are to try me, I am not guilty. I arrived at Verdun the morning of the day that I was made prisoner. It is true I wished for death, but I did not then know the means of obtaining it. I accompanied young Ternan, the friend of my youth, without any design; I was not received into the army; my name even was not known. Ternan imprudently walked to too great a distance from the camp, when a patrole of the enemy attacked us. Ternan was wounded at the first fire;—he was no longer able to defend himself, and being in uniform and with arms in his hands, if taken, his fate was decided. I called out to him to get away, while I engaged the patrole. At last, to induce him to quit me, I told him that he ought to go to the camp and get assistance; but before the succours

succours arrived, I was overpowered with numbers. I do not know by what accident I was not killed, but I attribute it to the desire I had to prolong the battle, in order to give time to Ternan to escape. This is all that has passed. Delphine, can you in this relation perceive any thing which will enable you to defend me with honour?"

"Generous conduct!" said Delphine, "but will they believe it; will they be affected by it? Ah! my friend, without the assistance of Providence, without his most signal protection, what hope remains for us! Give way to what you may call a superstition of the heart—comply with the request I am going to make, even though it may appear to you to be a weakness. Come and pray with me to the protector of the unhappy, that he may grant me eloquence to lead the judgment of men. Let us pray together.

Leonce felt embarrassed for a moment, but soon giving way to the sentiment with which

which Delphine had inspired him, he threw himself on his knees before the rays of the sun, which penetrated through the bars of his prison, and said, "Almighty and unknown Being, I now implore thee for the first time in my life. I do not deserve that thou shouldst hear my prayers, but one of thy angels attaches her life to mine; save me, since she wishes it, and I swear to consecrate the rest of my days to thy worship; my friend will teach me."

Delphine, on hearing these words, felt a ray of hope for a moment. "Oh!" said she, "however guilty, however foolish we may have been, perhaps the God of goodness, who has only given us commandments of love, will listen to our prayers, will take pity upon us. Adieu, Leonce! this evening—there still remains to us this evening," and quitted him repressing her emotions. Nature alway gives a moment of calm in the most violent situations of life; it is the last concentration of all one's powers; it is either the hour of prayer or of an eternal adieu to friends.

Delphine, on leaving the prison, met M. de Serbellane, who came to seek her: he conducted her to the President of the tribunal. When they arrived at the house of him on whom the life of Leonce depended, Delphine trembled; and, as she opened the door, she parted from M. de Serbellane with a look which told him that she solicited his prayers for her. She entered, and found the President surrounded by some secretaries. As she wished to converse with him without witnesses, she asked him if she might be permitted to speak to him alone? "I have no secrets with any body," said he, raising his voice in proportion as Delphine had lowered her's—"a man in a public situation should have no mystery in his conduct."—"Alas! Sir," said Delphine, "without doubt you have no secrets, but I may have some; and will you refuse me permission to confide them to you alone? "I have already told you," said the judge, "that I will not send those away by whom I am surround-

 ed:

ed: I ought not to do it." Delphine, then turning towards those who were in the room, said, with the most noble sweetness, "Gentlemen, I conjure you to leave us for a few moments: be generous to shew me that you pity me by complying with my request." The looks, the voice of Delphine, expressed the most profound emotion. All those who were in the room withdrew without saying a word. When Delphine found herself alone with him who had power to condemn or save her lover, her lips trembled before she uttered the words which, to produce or prevent conviction, were to give life or death. Every thing announced the judge to be an inflexible man. Nevertheless Delphine had perceived upon his desk the portrait of a woman holding a child in her arms; from this she concluded that he was a father, and she entertained the hope of being able to soften him. She endeavoured to state calmly the facts which tended to prove that Leonce had no rank in the enemy's

my's army, and that it was only the danger of his friend which induced him to assist him. She related, with courage and simplicity all the circumstances which induced Leonce to quit Switzerland. She took all the blame upon herself, and endeavoured to prove to the judge that Leonce had only given way to the misery which oppressed him; that he was not actuated by any political motive; that it was not any hostile sentiment which brought him to Verdun. The judge at first seemed inaccessible to conviction. He considered Leonce as guilty, and was determined to condemn him. The afflicting narrative of Delphine convinced him that Leonce was not so guilty as he supposed him to be: but he felt the impossibility of persuading his colleagues to acquit Leonce, when circumstances were so strong against him. Not choosing to take it upon himself to set him at liberty, he saw no means of saving him: but being strongly affected by the misery which Mad. d'Albemar suf-

fered, he endeavoured to put her off with vague answers; and, to put an end to this painful interview, Delphine felt that she had but one resource left, and that was to give way to all the emotion which she felt; but the idea that if that rescource failed she had nothing more left, made her determine to try means of another kind, which still left her last resource in reserve. At length the judge was preparing to withdraw, declaring, that this was a business upon which he could not make up his mind without consulting with his colleagues, and that upon their decision it should finally rest.

The unhappy Delphine, at these words, no longer able to restrain herself, rushed to the door, and cried: "No, you shall not proceed, you shall not be allowed to commit so barbarous an action! he whom you are going to condemn is not criminal, he is not guilty, even in your own opinion. I have proved to you, that he had never carried arms, that he never was

your enemy, that generosity and friendship only had influenced his conduct; and even admitting it to be true, that your opinions and his respecting the present war are contradictory to each other, is not he, whom chance has directed to adopt sentiments different from yours, the best and most sensible of beings? Men assimilate together in the different relations of fathers, of friends, and of children; it is from these sympathies of nature that every heart vibrates in unison, but the fury of factions excites only temporary aversions, which may be felt against powerful enemies, but which are extinguished after the moment of victory, when the conquered party are dejected by their fate, and no other sentiments are then entertained respecting them, than such as are inspired by their private virtues, their honourable attachments, and their misfortunes. Alas! the person for whom I implore your mercy, were you in danger, and I to sue him to spare your life, would not hesi-

tate, not only to acquit you, but also to relieve you by every means in his power. If you inflict death on an innocent person, you know not what destiny you prepare for yourself, you know not what remorse may for ever attend you! No longer any repose, no longer any pleasing enjoyments —In the bosom of your family, in the midst of your fellow-citizens, you will be continually harassed by alarms, and perpetual agitations: you must expect no more esteem; you must no longer confide in friendship. When you are plunged in sufferings, when sickness will present you with the frightful prospect of a dreadful end, an old age of misery and misfortune, you will reproach yourself with having well merited it, and even your own compassion will not attend you in the midst of miseries all your own."—"Young woman, you insult me," said the judge, "because I desire to obey the laws of my country,"—"I insult you!" cried Delphine, casting herself at his feet; "Oh

Heavens!

Heavens! if a single word has escaped from me, which might offend you, if my concern has not allowed me to be mistress of my words, for God's sake do not punish my friend for my indiscretion. Is he guilty of my imprudence, my weakness, or my folly? Say is it I who irritate you against him; I who have already caused so much unhappines in life? Ah! I prostrate myself before you, and call Heaven to witness, that I desire not to offend you. What reparation do you require? speak."----Then the unhappy Delphine, kneeling down, inclined her face towards the ground, in a situation so deplorable, that the Judge himself was affected.----" No, Madam," said he to her, raising her from the ground, " You have not offended me; be not alarmed; if I could save M. de Mondoville, it would be for your sake I should do so."----Delphine astonished, and transported with the first glimpse of hope that presented itself, and the effect of which was increased by the violent

violent agitation of her feelings, rested herself on the arm of that man, who no longer intimidated her, and said to him with an air of distraction and disorder:---- "It is for my sake you would save him! Know you, therefore, that I also am determined to die? In reality, you must not imagine that I should have survived so good, and so affectionate a person. He is on the point of carrying with him to the tomb so strong an affection for me, for wretched me, a senseless, thoughtless creature, who have overwhelmed him with misfortunes! What terrors has death for me? None----Death is my only hope: but you, who have unlimited power, will you refuse to my prayers that sacred word, that heavenly word, that absolves the innocent, and restores life to the wretches that cherish the hope of their acquittal? Alas! in this stormy period in which we live, do you know with any certainty, what your future destiny may be?

But

But six months since, my unhappy friend was surrounded with every blessing of love, and now behold him thrown into prison, doomed to perish without friends, and I only remain to weep over the fatal reverses he has experienced. You are the President of this tribunal: It is in your power, I am persuaded, if it be proved to you, that M. de Mondoville has never carried arms among the enemies of the country, to decide that there are no just grounds for a criminal decision, and of course, to set him at liberty."---"You do not know, madam," interrupted the judge, laying aside the forced appearance of stern justice, and displaying a character which was naturally humane and considerate: "You do not know the nature of your request. You seem to be ignorant of the dangers I expose myself to, if I withdraw M. de Mondoville from the natural course of justice. It is really my wish that liberty should be established in France, without the loss

 of

of a single man who may perish a sacrifice to public opinion; but, as the foreign war excites a violent fermentation in the country, do not require of the head of a family, who has been compelled to accept in time of such difficulty, a painful, but still a necessary employment, do not require of him to hazard his existence to preserve the life of a stranger." "Of a stranger," replied Delphine, "if he should prove innocent; and of a stranger, if his life depends on you! Ah! how dear should that unhappy man be to our hearts, whom we have had the power to save from an unjust and certain death! Yes, I agree with you, the sacrifice I require of you, demands courage, generosity, and self-denial; it is not a common degree of pity I expect from you, it is an elevation of soul which acts on the principle of ancient virtues, of republican virtues; virtues which will reflect more honour on the cause you embrace, than the most brilliant victories. Be therefore the man superior to all

others,

others, that man who sacrifices himself to every noble and virtuous emotion! Write on this paper," said she, reaching a paper towards the bench of the judge; "write that M. de Mondoville may come out of prison; then every thing is said—his name will not be mentioned, he will leave France and depart to Switzerland, and in that country, rely on two persons devoted to your service. Come and visit them there, and you will then know what the gratitude of generous hearts can be. Never can a more sacred tie unite the souls which deserve fidelity and honour. Ah! should the saviour of Leonce demand my life in the most distant quarter of the globe, twenty years hence, this life should be at his command. . . . .Sign, sign. . . . ."

The judge, astonished at the impressions that worked within him, put his hand upon his eyes to prevent his seeing Delphine; and beginning again to feel the influence of the fear which those emotions were struggling against, he made a last

effort to stifle his pity, and bluntly refused what Mad. d'Albemar imagined herself on the point of obtaining. On hearing this refusal, she fell down upon a chair almost lifeless, as if struck by an expected and mortal blow. At that moment a woman opened the door, and Delphine recognized in her the person by whose picture she had been so much struck. This woman, perceiving her husband was not alone, made a motion to retire. Delphine, inspired by her despair, advanced towards her, and conjured her to come in. "I came," said she, "to beg my husband to step up stairs to see the physician, who expresses much uneasiness about our son! "Yes, madam," said the woman, "I have but that child, and he is very ill indeed.—"Your child is ill," replied Delphine, and turning round towards the judge, on whom she cast a solemn look: "Well," said she, "if you deliver up Leonce to justice, your son, the fond object of all your tenderness, will die! yes, he

he will die!" The judge and his wife started back, terrified at the solemn sound of that prophetic voice—"Yes," continued Delphine, "you are little aware how infallible is the punishment for those who steel their breasts against the intrusions of pity—you will be punished in what you hold most dear: the pain we dread, is the pain that afflicts us, and the Being who punishes, knows where to direct the effects of his wrath; but," added she, with a torrent of tears, "if you save my friend, if you sign his enlargement, your only son will live, and bless the name of his father to his last hour." On hearing these words, the judge's wife, without uttering a word, but raising her imploring hands, and casting upon her husband the most supplicating looks, in that attitude solicited the pardon of Leonce, without seeming to be aware of what she was doing. The judge, looking alternately at Delphine and his wife, said, "No; I will refuse nothing while my son is in danger: no, let what may

may befal me, madam, you have gained your cause ;" and taking up his pen, he wrote an order for setting M. de Mondoville at liberty. Delphine could scarcely venture to breathe, or to speak, lest the slightest motion should make any change in the unexpected determination of the judge. On delivering the order to her, he observed : " I grant you, madam, the life of M. de Mondoville ; but lose no time in hastening his departure ; should a commissary arrive here from Paris, I should no longer be master to do any thing. I would, no doubt, very urgently represent to him what you have so solemnly asserted, that M. de Mondoville has not borne arms ; but perhaps, after every effort, it might be in vain that I endeavoured to save him. You have found the means, madam, of affecting me very deeply, I know not by what kind of supernatural eloquence and sensibility. It is to you that your friend is indebted for his life ; enjōy it both of you, and" . . . . . " put up your

your prayers," added the mother, "for my son's recovery."

Delphine, whose words were rendered almost unintelligible by her emotion, received the order on her bended knees, and pressing to her heart the helpful hand of her benefactor—"Be it given me not to die," said she, "most generous man, without having impressed upon your heart some portion of the happiness I owe to you! farewel." She ran to the prison, fearful of losing an instant, but now and then slackening her pace, that she might not attract the attention of those who saw her: unable however to still the alarm which she felt from the danger of the smallest delay. As she entered Leonce's chamber she handed the order to him, but remained for some moments wholly unable to utter a single word. Leonce read the order, and under the influence of the deepest emotion, he repeated again and again to Delphine—"It is thou who rescuest me from death! what

what a happy life would be mine, were I permitted to spend it with thee!" As soon as Delphine recovered her strength, she eagerly explained the necessity of getting away immediately, observing that the least delay might be fatal; and she then entreated the jailor with the most anxious ardour to run immediately, and comply with the last formality which was necessary, in order to get out of the prison and the town: he set out accordingly.

Leonce then gave reins to his imagination, and indulged it in all the most pleasing plans of happiness. "My dear Delphine," said he, "dost thou not recollect that house on the sloping hill of Bade, the situation which so forcibly brought Bellerive to our mind? We may purchase it, and make it our establishment. A very few slight alterations will make it completely resemble that abode where we spent such happy though disturbed moments; but in our new habitation the promise of the most unalloyed

felicity

felicity dawns upon us. In a protestant country you will not be persecuted; besides, I am certain I may, I can overawe Mad. de Ternan, and as the obsurity of our condition will excite no envy, so we shall have no enemies. Oh! under what glowing, enchanting colours does this prospect present itself to me! Delphine, my celeſtial friend, do give a touch or two to this picture: represent to me the destiny that awaits us, let hope transport us to it immediately." Delphine made no answer: the agitations of her heart had not yet subsided. "Would you be fearful," observed again Leonce, "again to discover in me any traces of those weaknesses which caused our separation; would you offer me that affront?" "No, no," interrupted Delphine. "Even before thy arrival," continued Leonce, "the recollection of thee and our love had wholly dissipated the errors which marked and marred my character. I am free to confess it---being resolved to die, death, which

which I impatiently expected, filled me with nothing but lugubrious sentiments. It seemed to me that nature accused me of having abused her benefits, and my imagination returning to its wonted state, at the approaching moment of self-destruction, was occupied by no idea, except the loss of those delightful affections which should have endeared to me the blessing of existence. Alas! a severe trial of this nature was, perhaps, necessary in my condition, and I shall never cease to feel the benefit of its instruction. I shall continue to live in order to be happy, and to be beloved . . . . ."--.-" Ah!" replied Delphine, " that period is elapsed; the keeper of the prison is not returning." This circumſtance increased her anxiety every moment, she no longer listened to the consoling accents of Leonce; and approaching to the bars of the prison, thro' which she had a prospect of the street, she remained immovably fixed in that situation. On a sudden she exclaimed,

" O my

"O my God! my God!" with such a piercing accent, that Leonce shuddered with affright and amazement, and running to her, enquired the cause of her emotion: "What alarms you, my dear Delphine!" said he, "your cries inspire me with a terror I never experienced in my life before?"—"What," replied Delphine, is meant by the appearance of those two men in black, who attend the keeper of the prison?" "They come," said Leonce, "to bring the order for my releasement." "No, no," replied Delphine, "that is not natural, they have another object in view."

The prison door was then unbarred, and the two men, a few moments after their entrance, declared, that the commissioner had arrived from Paris, that he had torn the order issued by the judge, and that it was determined that M. de Mondoville should not be released from prison previous to his trial. On hearing this declaration, Leonce turned aside in order to conceal

ceal his emotion. Delphine, raising her eyes to heaven, advanced with a firm step, to enquire of the messengers if she might not be permitted to see the commissioner. "No, madam," they replied, "you must not leave the prison, you are to be here in a state of arrestation till to-morrow." Leonce then held forth his hand with an emotion intermingled with pleasing sensations; the stupid spectators of this scene began to assure Delphine of her own safety, thinking that to be the object of her concern, and informed her that she need not be alarmed, as she was to be released at the moment when M. de Mondoville's sentence should be carried into execution. At these frightful words Delphine was ready to sink down; but recovering herself, she only said in a low voice:—"Is not this enough, O God!" She then enquired of the man who had spoken to her, if M. de Serbellane, the stranger who had accompanied her, would not be allowed to come to see her:—"He has desired us to

let

let you know," replied they, "that he should be here in an hour, when the court, which is now sitting, shall have pronounced sentence. He endeavours, as far as he can, to do you service; but, as the commissioner from Paris is now here, matters will not be settled as they were this morning." Leonce, provoked at these expressions, interrupted them by saying:—"I am not condemned, however, to endure your presence; leave me to myself." They muttered, so as to be understood, some words of resentment; but Leonce's looks overawed them, and they left the prison. Leonce then went towards Delphine, and pressed her in his arms with the most impassioned emotions. She made no reply, nor discovered any consciousness of these marks of tenderness, being totally absorbed in the deepest meditation. "O God!" said she, in interrupted accents, "O God! thou hast abandoned me; but preserve me from sentiments of impiety! Give me power to support this capricious

instance of bad fortune, without ceasing to believe in thee! But death, to close every thing, death. . . . ." Then throwing herself into Leonce's arms—" Well!" my dear friend, " we shall meet our fate together: this is the last instance of compassion on the part of Providence towards us. Let us press heart to heart; let their latest palpitations cease at the same instant: the only misery beyond the reach of human power to inflict, is to live or die, divided from each other."

Leonce, being uneasy respecting the resolution of Delphine, was desirous of speaking to her concerning the duties of her situation, and her future condition when he was to be no more: " I command thee not to speak to me on this subject," said she, interrupting him; " thou must be ignorant of my designs, whatever they may be. Ask me no further questions about them, and let us pass these last hours of our existence in that mutual confidence and resignation in which we yet experi-

ence some comfort." Leonce complied, being sensible that on that subject he could obtain nothing from her; but he flattered himself that M. de Serbellane would watch over the interests of his friend, when he himself should be no more, and it was to him he had intended to entrust her welfare.

Leonce and Delphine then remained in mutual silence for a considerable time: they expected M. de Serbellane, although they hoped for nothing from his exertions. He came at last, bearing in his countenance the impressions of the deep concern which he felt.

"To-morrow, at eight in the morning," said he to Leonce, "you are to be conducted to a plain at half a league distance from the city, to be there put to death by military execution. I have, however, some faint hopes; the generous judge, from whom Mad. d'Albemar had obtained your liberation, has just come out of court to speak to me concerning you. He has told

me,

me, that if I could instantly procure a declaration signed by you, which should positively attest that you never had any intention of carrying arms, and that you passed through the army in the quality of a traveller on your return to France; this declaration would be the means of saving you." Delphine, at this expression, raised her eyes, which, till then, had been fixed on the ground; and Leonce replied to M. de Serbellane with the most noble simplicity:—" When I was taken prisoner, I must confess I had not till then carried arms. I came to Verdun, not to attach myself to any cause, but with the hopes of meeting death; but of what importance are these details that concern me alone? Those Frenchmen, who serve in the foreign armies, naturally must have imagined that I came with the intention of joining them; a contrary declaration would to them appear a falsehood invented for the purpose of saving my own life; moreover, it was not my design to return into France;

France; I cannot, therefore, without debasing myself, affirm what, in the eyes of others, would appear to be false, or what would really be so." Delphine, on hearing this positive refusal, fixed her eyes on the ground without uttering a word; she was convinced that Leonce would never shrink from a resolution which he deemed honourable.

M. de Mondoville, being moved by the compassion of M. de Serbellane, took him by the hand, and said: "Generous friend, you have done every thing for us; as far as concerns myself, I have only one service to request from you. If my name ſhall be calumniated when I shall have ceased to live, bestow on truth the support of your respectable character; I beseech you never to forget, that the memory of a man, who had an ardent thirst for honour, is a pledge which he confides to the anxious solicitude of his friends."—"I accept with gratitude that glorious pledge," replied M. de Serbellane, "your reputation, most

assuredly, shall not be attacked; but, if ever I am called on to defend your character, what force and energy shall I not derive from my admiration of your courageous conduct!"—"But for the present," replied Leonce, "one request more, and that the most sacred of all!" He led M. de Serbellane toward the window, in order to recommend Delphine to his attention, when he should be no more. He might have spoken about her in her presence without being observed by her, so totally was she immersed in her own reflections. She was pale and motionless, and started frequently, but without hearing or seeing any circumstance, or even shedding a single tear. When every hope is surrendered, every demonstration of sorrow ceases, the soul recoils and shudders within itself, and the frozen blood runs no longer in the veins.

Leonce entered into a variety of particulars with M. de Serbellane, respecting the line of conduct he should observe, in

order to preserve the life of Delphine, should her sorrow inspire her with a wish to terminate her days. M. de Serbellane not only promised him every thing he desired, but even almost succeeded in quieting his alarms, by manifesting himself worthy of the charge of supporting and consoling the unhappy creature committed to his care. Leonce, struck with the magnanimity of his character, was not able to testify his gratitude without tears starting into his eyes: he was unshaken against misfortune, but pity disarmed his fortitude, and softened the sternness of his soul.

"Farewel, my dear friend," said he to him, "leave me alone with her; to-morrow, with the dawn of day, you will come to re-demand her: you will then receive the last grasp from the hand of a man who esteems and honours you. Farewel." M. de Serbellane, on his departure, approached Delphine, and asked her hand, which she let fall with thoughtless indiffe-

rence. "Madam," said .. with a faultering voice, "courage, an resignation! Grief, in its utmost extent, has still that last resource." A deep sigh relieved the bosom of Delphine:—"Do not forget Isore," replied she. "Adieu!"

M. de Serbellane departed, and promised to return in the morning to visst his unfortunate friends. Leonce and Delphine then found themselves alone, at the beginning of that solemn night which they were doomed to pass together, in the gloomy prison, which was faintly illuminated by a pale and trembling light—they heard the keeper close the dreadful bars upon them. "Alas!" cried Delphine, "if these doors should never be opened to us; if the day is never to dawn before our eyes; what abode of pleasure can be compared with this prison!—Leonce, will it be in their power to tear thee from me?" She then pressed him in her arms with a supernatural force, which was followed by a deep dejection and despair.

spair. Leonce, alarmed at her situation, wished to fix her attention on some ideas of a more pleasing nature; and throwing his arms round her, addressed her thus: "My dear Delphine, you believe in immortality; you have converted me to the same doctrine, and I die full of reliance on the Divine Being who has created you. I respected virtue when I adored your charms! and I am conscious to myself, notwithstanding all my faults, of possessing some claims to the mercy of the Divinity; and your prayers will obtain it for me. My dearest angel, we shall not, therefore, be separated for ever! Even before we shall meet in the abodes of the blessed, you will still perceive my soul within thy reach; you will always call on me, when in solitude, and the silent shades of night. Often will you repeat the name of Leonce; and his soul perhaps, hovering in the air, will listen to the soothing accents of his friend. Endeavour, my dear Delphine, to revive

 every

every soft and affecting sentiment of grief, and all the soothing charms of melancholy; let thy life be filled with the solitary and tender devotion which can be still paid to the memory of the object of our regret."

"Stop, Leonce," interrupted Delphine, "do not speak to me about life. Do you then imagine that I can bear the idea of surviving you? My heart, most certainly, has always relied on the immortality of the soul, and when my own destiny alone was concerned, this noble sentiment was sufficient for my repose: but is this hope sufficient, which the most virtuous behold but through a cloud, is it sufficient of itself to make me endure my existence after thy death? No---nothing can support me against the horrors of thy loss. During thy absence, my dear Leonce, the slighest recollection that respected thee, an expression thou hadst used in my presence, the places where we conversed together, a thousand incidents which

which traced the ever fleeting ideas of our fancy, overwhelmed with the weight of woe unsufferable; and I should still have the same memorials, but pictured with the images of death, I should exclaim incessantly, Never, never will my tears and lamentations regain from universal nature the sound of thy voice, the traces of thy steps, or the shadow of thy features! Leonce, my tender friend, thou, who in my sorrows so often cheerest my spirits, I should throw myself upon the earth, which should close on thee for ever, without allowing a passage for a single sigh in answer to my tears! No—I will not go into that desert, into that gloomy silence, and that night of nature in which I can behold thee no more! Shall death, the frightful idea of which has often petrified me with terror, snatch thee as his prey, and leave me still alive! Must I represent to my imagination, thy pale, disfigured countenance, thy eyes sunk in

 eternal

eternal darkness, and thy cold remains consigned to the embraces of the tomb! Thou shalt not be there alone, my dear friend, death shall unite the faithful Delphine with thee! Leonce, thou s[illegible] vereign of my days," continued De[illegible] phine, "I see thou art affected, thy hea[illegible] vibrates with mine; only tell me, th[illegible] thou callest me forth, and wishest me n[illegible] to live! Ah! I should be enraptured wi[illegible] that pathetic proof of love, that prou[illegible] contempt of vulgar pity, that true com[illegible] passion which might prompt thee to the[illegible] words:---*Delphine, unhappy Delphine! fo[illegible] low me to the grave; attempt not to live with[illegible] out the protecting arm of thy former guide an[illegible] friend.*—Oh! Leonce, Leonce, repeat thes[illegible] words of consolation, I conjure thee."- The passionate prayers of Delphine wer[illegible] interrupted by her tears; she embraced the knees of Leonce, she wished to re ceive at his hands the counsel of death; he sought in vain to calm her agitation, and

and conjured her to withdraw with M. de Serbellane before the frightful hour of his execution.

Delphine then recollecting the fatal ring, wished to speak of it to Leonce, but without acquainting him that it was in her possession, dreading he might take it from her, though he might resolve to turn it to no use.

" Leonce," said she, " this species of death, which resembles the end of the vilest criminals—this mode of punishment in the presence of an infuriate crowd—is it not revolting to thy soul? Will you hesitate to elude it? Our friend, M. de Serbellane may provide us with a salutary poison, which will emancipate us from the cruel destiny that attends us." Leonce astonished, paused for a few moments, and then said:

" My friend, I think it more worthy of my character to die in the sight of Frenchmen; they now condemn me, but perhaps they will one day know that I did not deserve it,

and if in my last moments I have shewn some energy of mind, I cherish a hope, I must confess, that even my enemies will not see me fall without emotion. Pardon me, my friend, if this idea compels me to refuse the unlooked for aid which you kindly offer me; your hand would close my eyes, and the same sentiment which animated my existence, would sweetly accompany me till its termination; ah! how dearly it costs me to deprive myself of it!" —Delphine was silent, she feared that by pressing the point, she should discover to Leonce that she was in possession of an infallible mean to prevent her surviving him.

"Alas!" continued Leonce, "this prison, I own, casts a certain gloom over my last hours; I should like to be able to behold the face of heaven with thee; but it is these walls that intercept its view, and it is the barbarity of men, at once our keepers and our judges, that gives to death a character so terrible; twenty times have I wished

wished to die at your feet, but now that I have abjured my miserable errors, now that I might be your husband, your happy husband—Oh God!"—He stopped, fearing to recal ideas too afflictive.

Delphine, oppressed with despair, was incapable of expressing the pangs she suffered: a few more hours passed away, in which Leonce shewed himself the most tender and the most courageous of men. Delphine sometimes admired him, but more frequently interrupted him with her sighs. At length, Leonce wearied out by several sleepless nights, reclined his head on Delphine's knees, and slept for about an hour. She eyed him in the perfection of manly beauty, his black hair fell over his forehead, and his face still preserved an expression of affection, the charm of which remained unaltered by sleep.

Ah! who was ever in so cruel a situation? who was ever so overwhelmed with grief? The unfortunate Delphine experienced that night the most distracting sensations that

can

can afflict the soul. She knew the time was advancing, and looked incessantly towards the window, dreading the arrival of the harbinger of day. Her eyes were alternately fixed on the enchanting features of her lover, and on that heaven, the first rays of which were to snatch him from her; but she soon perceived on the wall opposite to the window, the fatal gleam announcing the day, and before Leonce waked, the sun had penetrated this abode of despair.—"Oh God!" cried she, "not a cloud, not a mournful veil to intercept his rays! the most brilliant display of nature's splendour to shine upon the most horrible of crimes, and the most unfortunate of beings!—At length the noise of the drum, that sudden and fatal sound, awakened Leonce: He fixed his eyes on Delphine, and embracing her with rapture:—"It is you," said he, "it is yet you! till my last moment the sight of you will banish all my pains!"

Leonce hastened to tie his disordered hair, to give his countenance an air of tran-

quillity

quillity and of fortitude. Delphine then remained at some distance from Leonce, and followed his movements, supporting herself from time to time against the wall, calling the power of her will to the aid of her sinking strength. At length, Leonce approached her, and observing the extreme alteration of her features, he could no longer repress his feelings.—" Delphine," cried he, " at this moment, though deserted by hope, a cruel yet sweet emotion obliges me to repeat it to you ; yes, I regret life ! When my savage enemies appear, I shall take care to conceal that sentiment from them, but I confess it to you, by whom it was inspired.—The soldiers approached the prison, and the doors were unbolted to admit them. Then Delphine, apparently frantic, threw herself at the feet of Leonce, and cried :—" My friend, forgive me your death, of which I am the real cause. I never loved but you ; this heart never fluttered but in your presence, no other voice ever reigned in my soul ; we are going

going to die together, when long years of union and tenderness might be permitted us; it must be so! The barbarians are at hand, there is yet a moment, but may all the passion of a whole life be concentrated in that moment!"—The door opened, and the soldiers filled the apartment.

Delphine, rising with dignity, thus addressed the soldiers;—"I was," said she, at the feet of the worthiest of men, of the most admirable character that ever existed; I owe him that homage; you, you are going to conduct him to execution. Your blind obedience steels your hearts to pity; but what have I said? be not offended: I have still a favour to implore of you: permit me to follow my friend to death."—"Madam," replied the officer, "that permission is usually granted only to the priest who exhorts the condemned before they die."—"Well," said Delphine, "I will perform that solemn office. "Leonce," said she, turning to him, "religion gives to the

the unfortunate, on the way to execution, a friend to comfort them, will you permit me to be that friend? I will speak to you, as he would, in the name of a beneficent God: for a moment I was not worthy of the duty, for a moment I doubted; I thought the misery which overwhelmed me greater than my faults; but now religious hopes have resumed their sway in my heart; heaven has inspired me with them, and I will impart them to you."

"What you wish to undertake," replied Leonce, "is beyond your strength."—"No; I have resolved upon it," rejoined Delphine, "you will see me follow you with a firm step, with a courageous mind; I am not more agitated, why should I not now possess equal calmness with yourself?"—"Madam," said the officer, "the criminal will be carried in a cart, half a league from the town, into the plain where he is to be shot; you will not be able to follow him so far."—"I shall," she replied.—"Ah!" cried Leonce, "should I permit this

this generous effort? "You must," interrupted Delphine—and M. de Serbellane entering at that moment, likewise obtained permission to accompany Mad. d'Albemar. Leonce, still hesitating whether he should consent to the desire of his friend, consulted M. de Serbellane.—"Do not," said he, "oppose a wish which Mad. d'Albemar expresses with such earnestness; if she can survive you, she must first experience affliction's keenest pangs; suffer her to meet them, refuse her nothing."

I have occasion to collect myself for a moment, previous to this great act of courage; "grant it me," said she, addressing the officer of the guard, "your funeral car is not yet arrived." The officer consented; the goaler muttered that he had not an apartment to offer to her, she could not be alone, excepting one in which a prisoner had died the preceding night. Delphine heard not what he said, and M. de Serbellane, occupied in attending to the farewel desires of Leonce, forgot

got the fatal present he had made to Mad. d'Albemar; she followed the goaler, and he left her after having shewn her the door of the apartment. Close to the door was the corpse of an unfortunate prisoner, who had died during the night, and of four tapers placed at the corners of the shell, two were still burning, and mingled their gloomy light with that of day. Delphine shuddered at the sight, and stepped back; but she determined to proceed, and said, "why should I then be afraid of death? Is it not what I am seeking? why does the sight of it already terrify me?" —In order to enter it was necessary to pass close to the coffin placed before the door, Delphine's dress caught by it, and, overcome with terror, she fell on her knees in the room before the bed, still unmade, from which the body of the deceased had been just taken. His clothes were scattered around, a book open, a watch still going, all the details of man's life, excepting the man himself, whom the coffin contained!

Such a spectacle would have struck the imagination in circumstances of less perturbation; it almost entirely deprived Delphine of reason; she no longer knew whether her lover was yet alive, she called him several times, and in a moment of convulsion and despair she opened the ring containing the poison, and hastily swallowed its contents; scarcely had she performed this desperate act, when she prostrated herself on the floor; after remaining in that situation some moments, she rose more tranquil, but absorbed in profound meditation.

"O my God!" she then exclaimed, "what have I done? have I made myself guilty? can I no longer expect thy mercy? I was obliged to follow him to execution; I owed him this last proof of the love which has been his destruction; should I have had the power to do it without the certainty of dying? I might have trusted to grief, in time it would have killed me; but, O my God, couldst thou

order

order me to endure that dreadful period? were those torments necessary? and will not the angels which surround thee rejoice to see them abridged! If any attachment had been left me on earth, if I had a father whom I could comfort in his old age, I would live, I should think myself commanded by a sacred duty to do so; but the unfortunate who is about to perish was my only friend, and him thou takest away! O my God! cried she, falling on her knees, with her eyes raised to heaven; "I have often been assured that thou will not pardon the crime I have just committed; trouble, distraction led me to it; is it true that thou wilt now be inflexible? Am I more criminal than all those who have been cruel towards their fellow-creatures? and yet doubtless some of them will be pardoned!—thou didst bestow on me youth, beauty, all the blessings of life, and I reject this life; I must then have suffered much, and I shall suffer eternally! and thou wouldst not accept my repentance!

No,

No, thou acceptest it, I feel it, new strength invigorates me; I hear the cart, I hear the feet of the horses that are to draw my beloved, I will converse with him of thee, my God; bless my words, and if my voice should utter impiety, if thou rejectest my prayers for myself, grant that when he hears me he may experience religious sensations, that will obtain for him thy mercy!—" She then descended with a firm step, and rejoined Leonce at the moment he was ascending the cart.

Delphine walked by his side, and the soldiers, out of compassion, marched slowly along, and frequently stopped the vehicle to give her an opportunity of speaking to Leonce. M. de Serbellane, who followed her, distributed money that no opposition might be made to these delays. Delphine at first felt an inclination to confess to her friend what she had done to ensure her death; she would have experienced a gratification in imparting to him this fatal and last proof of the unbounded affection she entertained

entertained for him; but impressed with the solemnity of the duty which she had taken upon herself, she apprehended lest Leonce, after such an avowal, might be wholly engrossed by her, and not yield to the religious sentiments with which she wished to inspire him; and whatever it might cost her, she resolved to converse with him on piety rather than on love.

In passing through the town, the mob, which collected round them from all parts, indulged in opprobrious expressions against him whom they supposed criminal because he had been condemned. Leonce grew pale and red alternately with indignation and fury.—"Despise," said Delphine, "these miserable insults. Banish from thy soul all sentiments of animosity; ah! we shall soon enter the abode of indulgence and of oblivion, the abode where our enemies shall be no more heard. Look at that sky, how pure, how serene! can the Author of these wonders have abandoned us only? That asylum, towards which our souls

souls are speeding, Leonce, is ours; we are expected there, we are invited thither; was not the love which I feel for thee inspired by my Creator? he will not separate two beings, whom he has rendered necessary to each other. Leonce, thy conduct has been blameless, it is mine only that deserves censure; but thou shalt plead for my reception in that region of heaven which is destined for thee. Thou wilt say, yes, thou will say, that thou art not happy there without me. The Supreme Being will grant thee thy friend, thou wilt ask for her, will thou not Leonce?"—Delphine was then on the point of revealing the whole affair, and of telling him what guilty action it was, for which he was to implore pardon for her. Perhaps, likewise, she was desirous for him to know the true cause of the extraordinary courage which she manifested in the most terrible of all situations; but Leonce raised towards heaven a look full of courage and confidence; this look convinced Delphine that she had at length

inspired

spired her friend with the pious hopes she wished; and she was afraid of destroying all the effect of her words, by confessing from what fault even religion itself had not been able to preserve her.

Repressing therefore once more every thing that might have betrayed her secret, Delphine collected her powers to fulfil, with propriety, the important commission with which she had charged herself.—" Behold no longer in me," said she to Leonce; " her who partook of thy faults, her who was still more guilty. I loved virtue, but I had not the strength to accomplish it; and God, in pity withdraws from the world the unfortunate female whose feeble heart has been distracted between love and duty. I am acting in the place of a religious man, who would have been truly worthy to speak to you in heaven's name; but a voice which is dear to thee may probably penetrate deeper into thy soul; and, Leonce, hearken to that voice as if the Deity had for a moment consecrated it. Amid the terrors which

surround

surround us, when nature, the friend of life, revolts in our bosoms, eternal Providence sees and protects us; no, it is impossible that all the ideas, all the sentiment which animates us, should be annihilated; our mind yet embraces an immense futurity, our hearts still live entirely in the object they love, and in a few minutes, on this plain, upon which the wheels of this cart will soon carry us, a sword might destroy the connection of so many ideas, of so many sentiments, and deliver them to the wind which disperses the dust! Those who fall by degrees under the weight of years may believe in a destruction which they have already felt, but we proceed to the tomb in the vigour of existence, we proclaim immortality! It is true, this time which is passing away, these arms which are preparing, this dismal sound which already announces the mortal blow, fill all the senses with terror; but it is a last effort of the deceived imagination, truth will encourage us; our soul retires within itself, and in our inmost

thoughts

thoughts, in that sanctuary of love and virtue we again find a god! Ah! Leonce, glory and torment of my life! it is I who exhort thee to die, it is I---prayer has given me a supernatural power; prayer, that refuge of the soul which delivers us from pain, from nature, and from mankind: imitate me, Leonce, seek likewise this refuge."

The length and fatigue of the way had made Delphine's paleness disappear; her eyes had an expression of which nothing can afford an idea; the most impassioned and the most gloomy sentiments were at the same time reflected in them; and notwithstanding the cruel pains which she began to feel, and which she endeavoured to overcome, her figure was still so enchanting, that even the soldiers, struck with her charms, exclaimed:—" How beautiful she is!" and involuntarily grounded their arms to look at her. Leonce heard these universal praises, and intoxicated with love, he uttered these words in a low voice.—" Ah, God! what have I done, that thou shouldst

take away my life; life, the greatest blessing with her;" Delphine heard him.--- "My friend," replied she, "Let us not deceive ourselves with respect to the price which we now attach to existence; we see only blessings in what we lose, and we forget, alas! how much we have suffered. Leonce, I loved thee to idolatry! but the day on which the ingratitude of friendship was revealed to me, I received a wound which is not yet healed. Leonce, beings like us would always have been unhappy in the world; the sensibility and pride of our nature are not suited to our destiny; since a fatality prevented our marriage, since we have been deprived of the happiness of virtue, I have not passed one day, without experiencing in my heart, an inexpressibly painful sensation, which continually oppressed me. Ah! is it nothing, not to grow old, not to arrive at the age when our enthusiasm for what is great and noble might have been damp d by witnessing the prosperity of vice, and the miseries of good men!

men! See, in what times we were appointed to live; in the midst of a sanguinary revolution, which will for a long time overwhelm virtue, liberty and our country. My friend, it is kindness in heaven to mark this moment as the period of our lives. An obstacle separated us; you no longer think of it now; it might again arise if we were saved; you know not how many impediments there are to happiness. Ah! let us not accuse Providence, we are ignorant of its secrets: and they are not the most unhappy of its children who rest together, free from the commission of crime, and at that period of life, when the heart, still pure and sensible, is an offering worthy of heaven—"

These tender words had affected Leonce, and for some moments he appeared wrapped in religious meditation.—Suddenly, upon approaching the plain, the music was heard; it was a march well known, alas! to Leonce and Delphine. Leonce trembled when he heard it:---" O my friend!" said he, " that tune is the same that was executed

cured the day on which I entered the church to marry Matilda. That day resembled this. I am glad that this air announces my death. My soul felt nearly the same pains in both situations; but I swear to thee, that I suffer less to day."---As he concluded these words, the carriage stopped on the spot where he was to be shot. He resolved then not to abandon himself to sentiments that might shake his fortitude. He quickly dismounted from the cart, and advanced, making a sign to M. de Serbellane to take care of Delphine. Then turning towards the troop by which he was surrounded, he said, with that look which had always commanded respect:---" Soldiers, you shall not cover the eyes of a brave man; only tell me at what distance to place myself, and aim at my heart; that heart is innocent and proud, and it will not beat quicker for fear death. Come."---Before he had placed himself on the appointed spot, he looked once more towards Delphine; she had fallen into the arms of M. de Serbellane;

he

he ran towards her, and heard M. de Serbellane exclaim:---" Unfortunate creature! she has taken the poison she procured from me for Leonce; it is over with her, she is dead!

Leonce uttered cries of despair which drew tears from all those who had beheld him so tranquil a moment before, when marching to death; no one ventured to speak a word, nor make a movement whilst contemplating the cruel spectacle. Delphine came to herself amidst the convulsions of death, and had still power to say to Leonce, who held her hand on his knees: —" My friend, I owed my courage to death which I carried in my bosom."---And when Leonce accused himself of barbarity for having consented that she should follow him to execution:---" " Ah! my friend," said she, " thank nature for having spared me the hours which I should have survived thee; pardon me, Leonce, for having inflicted the keenest pain on the strongest mind; it is thou who for a moment surviv-

est me; I die not without thee, my hand still holds thine; and my expiring breath is caught in thy bosom. I behold those soldiers ready to seize thee. . . . Ah God! from what misery death saves me."—and she expired. Leonce threw himself on the ground beside her, holding her fast in his embrace. The soldiers themselves, who remained at some distance, were affected; they thought no more on fullfiling their cruel commission; some even exclaimed--- "No, we will not kill this unfortunate man, it is bad enough for his poor mistress to die of grief; no, let him go, we will not fire at him."

Leonce heard them, and rising, he cried, in the most ungovernable fury: "Just heaven! you could not use me worse, barbarians, than to spare me after having killed her. Fire, instantly fire"---and he approached them, carrying the lifeless corpse of his mistress. But suddenly, shuddering with horror at the idea that the lovely image of his mistress might be disfigured by

by the shots fired at him, he returned to M. Serbellane, and placed Delphine in his arms; she appeared as if chearfully sleeping on her friend's bosom :—" I must separate myself from her," said he, " that her noble remains may not be outraged by barbarians. Lay us together in the same tomb: it is there that the storms of fate will have cast a lamentable wreck ; it is there that in eternal repose my innocent friend will pardon my errors and her misfortunes."---In concluding these words, he left him : when he was opposite the soldiers, they still hesitated, and their gestures expressed their unwillingness to obey the orders they had received. Every moment of life now afflicted Leonce with a thousand pangs : perfectly frantic he had recourse to insult : endeavoured by every means to inflame the anger of the soldiers, threatened to rush upon them if they did not fire at him; and at length, calling them opprobrious names, to irritate them still more, one of them, enraged, seized his musquet, which he had thrown

thrown on the ground, and said:---"Since he will have it, let us satisfy him."---He fired---Leonce fell lifeless.

M. de Serbellane paid the last duties to his friends. He enclosed them in one tomb, which he caused to be erected by the side of a river in a grove of poplars, and went to Switzerland, to watch over the destiny of Isore, whom the loss of Delphine had plunged into the profoundest melancholy; he wrote to her mother, and obtained permission to take her daughter to Mlle d'Albemar, to whom this indulgence alone could render life supportable after the loss of Delphine. M. de Lebensei acquired an illustrious name in the French armies. Why did not the character of Leonce de Mondoville permit him to enjoy the same glorious destiny.

M. de Serbellane, who with a mind naturally tranquil, always acted from the inspiration of the tenderest and most exalted sentiments, returned to France at the hazard of his life, to visit once more the tomb

tomb of his friends, and to assure himself that the man to whom he had entrusted the care of it, had preserved it from all insult in the midst of the war. The following is a fragment of a letter which he wrote upon his return from this journey, consecrated to friendship:

"I feel myself better, said he, for having several times reposed near their ashes. I incessantly repeated to myself that they had not merited their misfortunes; I did not dissemble their errors; Leonce should have braved public opinion in many circumstances in which his welfare and love rendered it his duty; and Delphine, on the contrary, trusting too much to the purity of her heart, never knew how to respect the power of reputation, to which women ought to submit; but nature and conscience teach this moral, instituted by society, which imposes almost opposite laws on men and women; and should my unfortunate friend have suffered so much for such venial errors! Such were my reflections,

and nothing is more painful to the heart of an honest man, than the obscurity which hides from him God's justice on earth."

But one evening as I was near the tomb where Leonce and Delphine reposed, a sudden remorse stung my inmost heart, and I reproached myself with having looked upon their lot as supremely unhappy. At that moment perhaps my friends, pitying the poignancy of my regret, might be anxious to console me, or to endeavour to give me to understand that they were happy, that they loved one another, and that the Supreme Being had not deserted them, since he had not permitted them to survive each other. I spent the night in contemplating the lot of man: those hours were the happiest of my life, and nevertheless it was the sentiment of death that wholly engrossed them: but sure I am now, that my friends looked down upon me from heaven, and directed my meditations: they discarded from me those phantoms of the imagination, which cloud the close of life

with

with horror: methought I perceived by the light of the moon their light thin shades float over the leaves of the trees without agitating them; once even I asked them whether I should not do well to rejoin them; whether it was not true, that upon this earth exalted natures and keen sensibilities, had nothing to expect but a dreary succession of pains to pains, of sorrows to sorrows: then I imagined, that a voice mingling with the breath of the wind, said to me: "Endure thy sufferings; await nature, and do good to mankind." I bowed down my impatient resignation; but before I left that spot, I inscribed on a tree that grew near the tomb of my friends, the following verse, the only consolation of the unfortunate, from whom death has torn the object of their affections:

"*On ne me répond pas, mais peut-être on m'entend.*"
"I get no answer; ſtill, perhaps, I'm heard."

FINIS.

T. Gillet, Salisbury square.